

THE CREED
AND
THE PRAYER

J. WESLEY JOHNSTON, D.D.

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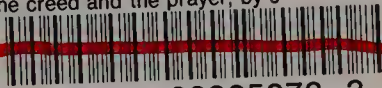
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CARMENT

THE CREED

AND

THE PRAYER

By J. WESLEY JOHNSTON, D.D.

Introduction by
WILLIAM V. KELLEY, D.D.



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TO
MY DEAR FRIENDS
IN
ST. JOHN'S METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
BROOKLYN, N. Y.,
WHOSE UNVARYING KINDNESS AND GRATEFUL APPRECIATION
HAVE SO GLADDENED AND ENRICHED MY MINISTRY,
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED.

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INTRODUCTION.

TWENTY years of prominent pastorates in Boston, Newark, Jersey City, New York, and Brooklyn have not left the author of this volume in need of introduction. Nor does he seek support in carrying responsibility for his utterances, being accustomed to travel under his own auspices, speak his message with independent candor, and bear all due responsibility therefor. Were there anything in these discourses likely to provoke adverse criticism the author of them would not flinch from answering for himself, nor go about to find an indorser whom he might involve in sharing the responsibility. Neither do the sermons need a sponsor; they are able to go upon their merits.

It is proper to say that this volume is not a show-case display of the selected best from an entire pastorate, but contains a double series delivered on twenty-one Sunday evenings from November to May, with only the interruption made by special evangelistic services in January; and the sermons form to some extent an observance of the Church year.

This is the only volume of sermons which we now recall upon the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The fact that its appearance is coincident with the action of our General Conference, which enjoins upon our congregations the use of the Apostles' Creed in our regular Sabbath services, shows that it

falls in opportunely with the present desire of the Church in giving prominence to these sacred formulæ of profession and supplication, the one authoritative with the command of Christ, the other venerable with the consensus, and hallowed by the worship of the saints through many Christian centuries.

Few things can be more wholesome and edifying than to teach children, youth, and adults to say, "I believe," and to put definitely stated and clearly understood objects after that active-transitive verb. It is at least doubtful whether religious professors who cannot say what they believe are really believers at all. Their ignorance, deep and dense and dumb, is practical agnosticism. And churches which remand creeds and catechisms to the limbo of historical cabinets are substituting make-believe for believing.

As a rule in city churches, the minister's most difficult problem is the success of the second service, whether held in afternoon or evening. That these discourses on themes so sober, august, and ancient as the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer attracted good evening congregations, without special advertising and in much unfavorable weather, is, perhaps, some indication of the traditions of St. John's Church, as well as of the character of the community where they were delivered; and is certainly a vindication of the wisdom of the preacher's method.

Sermons stiff with doctrine and firm with the proclamation of a dogmatic faith can, even in this day, command attention and awaken interest. Whatever helps to prove that such is the fact is of value in encouraging the Christian pulpit to cherish high ideals with unfaltering fidelity to its trust, and

with faith in the power and popularity of earnest Gospel preaching. Many a meritorious minister is subjected to painful and dangerous temptation. Preaching the Gospel in simplicity and godly sincerity, he sometimes sees the gaping crowd go by his doors to throng a theatrical and meretricious ministry where some clerical mountebank turns the church into an amusement hall and the worship of the Highest into a sort of religious vaudeville, stripping the house of God of its sanctities and desecrating the holy of holies. It is a spectacle to make the angels weep when an accredited ambassador of heaven stoops to play the clown with cap and bells, as if the Christian Gospel meant not "that God was in Christ," the suffering and dying Saviour of the lost, "reconciling the world unto himself;" but that the Monarch of the skies keeps a court-jester, and has sent the king's fool to amuse mankind and make the groundlings laugh. Church advertisements which suggest the show bills of a playhouse are a disgrace and a misdemeanor. The pulpit sinks to egregious folly if not to essential felony when it resorts to tricks and sensationalism, instead of fulfilling a prophet's mission in a ministry—not time-serving and obsequious, but faithful and fearless; not saccharine and mellifluous, but pungent and trenchant; not rattle-brained, but sturdy—a ministry neither antic nor pedantic, but grappling tight and close with reason and with conscience to sway men mightily toward immediate repentance, holiness of heart, and righteousness of life. Prophets and apostles, whose successors we are, were no distributors of jewelry and bonbons. They were conscious of having tremendous business to transact

with the souls of the sons of men. From them there is no warrant for the sentimental preaching which tickles the emotions and flushes the lachrymal ducts, but makes little of the austere reign of moral law, the solemn realities of personal accountability, the purity without which we can have neither peace nor power, the obligation to consistent conduct in a godly life, and the practical piety of benevolence and beneficence as stewards of God's manifold mercies.

The world respects an explicit and downright pulpit—thoroughbred, and not half-breed; positively something, and not merely something or other; self-consistent in its successive utterances, and not self-contradictory; firm and steady in its course, and not vacillating and wavering so that no one can tell what it stands for. Doctrines, creeds, and catechetical instruction are indispensable for making intelligent and biblically educated Christians. Only that pulpit which feeds the hungry soul with the strong meat of the word will strengthen and establish. The Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the Four Gospels, the Parables, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles furnish solid staple enough for an everlasting ministry of power. Christ spreads His table with nutriment, not husks or syllabub. Dry disquisitions and sentimental drivel cannot satisfy acute and intense spiritual needs. Concerning the preaching of O. W. Holmes's father a deacon said, "He fed us sawdust with a spoon." It was learned and theological, but dull. Certain church officers, when asked why they were trying to get rid of a fanciful pulpit romancer, answered, "We must have something to eat."

THE APOSTLES' CREED.

“ Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things ; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone ; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.”—
Isa. xliv, 24.

THE CREED AND THE PRAYER.

I.

**“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of
heaven and earth.”**

THIS body of ours has many parts. There are hands, feet, eyes, ears, the organs of speech and taste and smell ; and so perfect is the mechanism that though each part is complete in itself, and does its own appointed work, yet in a measure it is dependent upon all of the others. But while we have this unity, and also this diversity, yet the life is the same in all, for that life comes from the heart ; and with each throb the rich, strong blood pulses through every vein and completes the circuit of the entire body. No part is neglected, no part is overlooked ; the nerve centers of the brain, so delicate that even the hairs of the head are as hempen ropes in comparison, as well as the most distant extremities, receive their portion of this lifeblood ; and hence are able to perform the functions with which they are charged. And so exactly with the great body known as the Christian Church. It is divided into many parts and sects and denominations, it bears different names, it has different politics and different forms, it exists under different modes

of government and maintains different orders of service ; but all of its life is derived from one source, and though, to our thinking, some of these forms of faith have been corrupted, and some of these branches of the Christian Church have lost their original virtue and power, nevertheless it is well for us to remember that the Greek Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Evangelical Protestant Church, at heart, have only one creed, and that the one known as the "Apostles' Creed." And it is something to be grateful for, that away yonder in the cathedral of St. Petersburg, and in that still greater cathedral in the city of Rome, as well as in the old Abbey of Westminster, the same creed was recited this morning by the multitude of worshipers ; while we on this Western continent, though separated by the trackless sea, used the same precious form, so that in reality, from the rising to the setting of the sun, there went up from different nations and peoples and tongues one common expression of faith.

Just when or how this Apostles' Creed was originally formed, no one can exactly say. We can trace it back without any difficulty as far as the fourth century, but still the question of its authorship remains unsettled. Some affirm that it is the joint work of the apostles, each one of whom contributed a definite statement, hence its name ; but this claim cannot be supported by the necessary evidence. All admit, however, that it belongs to a very early period in the Christian Church, for we find it in almost its present form in the writings of the Fathers in the third century, and exactly as it now is in the fourth century. Its use as an element of public service was

first instituted in the Greek Church at Antioch, and this is a pleasant coincidence; for it was in Antioch that the name Christian was first applied to the disciples of Jesus. In the eleventh century it was introduced into the ritual of the Roman Church, and was adopted by the Church of England at the time of the Reformation. Great stress is laid upon this creed, not only by the Churches in which it forms an essential part of the regular liturgy, but in all the others as well, and as a general thing it is made the basis of admission to membership. Nor can this be wondered at, for anything more definite, more comprehensive, or more spiritual cannot possibly be imagined. Though embracing only a few sentences, and singularly rhythmic and easy to remember, yet so marvelously are these sentences compacted that they contain the fundamental doctrines of all divine revelation. Anyone who knows this creed thoroughly, who really understands it, who comprehends its full meaning, is a Christian in the largest application of that term; and yet it is possible to repeat it every Sunday, or even every day, and have its every word faithfully written upon the memory, and still not know anything of either its intent or significance.

How, then, can we better improve these Advent days, when our minds and hearts are turned to the greatest festival of the Christian Church, and when we are preparing to worthily celebrate the nativity of Christ, than to meditate upon and study with some degree of seriousness a creed of which He is the central figure?

Indeed, this is not only wise and proper, but it is essential, for you notice how very personal this creed

is—"I believe." "I," not the Church, not a body of men in council or convocation, but "I;" and how can we say this with any measure of truthfulness unless we have examined it carefully, and see if it contains that to which we are ready to subscribe? To sign a document without knowing anything of its contents is always a dangerous proceeding; neither is it any less dangerous to give assent to a creed or doctrine without knowing just what it means.

"I believe in God." How simple these words are! How easy to repeat! And yet this one expression contains almost an infinitude of meaning. If you held between your fingers, or on the palm of your hand, a tiny grain taken from an ear of corn, at the first glance it might not seem to represent a great deal; but when you look at it more closely, and try to understand all that it includes, you begin to discover that that grain of corn has meanings of the most marvelous import and degree. Every law of nature centers in it—the flashing sunlight, the driving rain, the gentle dew, the grateful wind from the south, the mysterious forces that are hidden in the earth; and before you complete your study of that one grain you will have found that heat, light, germination, fructification, climatic conditions, chemical action—in short, the whole of economy of earth and sky is here brought into play, and where at first you saw nothing but a grain of corn now you see a whole world.

And so it is with this first declaration of the creed. Just take these words, "I believe in God," and follow them out to their full meaning, and you will see that they include so much and involve so much that what at first seemed, in a measure, like the grain of

corn, widens in its reach and application until all of earth and all of heaven is gathered within its circle.

"I believe in God." "God" from the same root as the word "good," so here at the very beginning we declare our faith in the goodness of God. And yet look at this world, in sin, in shame, in rebellion, in guilt, in disobedience, in all manner of iniquity. Look at the crime, the poverty, the degradation, the fearful conditions, which exist on almost every hand. Look at the wars, the plagues, the famines, the pestilences, which cause such horror and desolation. Look at the murders, the atrocities, the barbarities, the cruelties, in which the most fearful passions are engaged. Look at the injustice, the inequality, the oppression, the avarice, with which all nations are distressed. And it is well to look at these things, to look at them carefully, and see if we can by any means reconcile them with the idea of a God whose very name indicates that He is supremely good and in whose goodness we profess to believe.

But how can they be reconciled? Very easily; there is nothing more easy; for do we not see here a proof of the infinite goodness of God, first of all in giving to His creatures liberty, and then in showing mercy to their weaknesses and failings? If God was not supremely good He would long since have crushed this world into everlasting nothingness, not even allowing its dust to pollute the glory of His universe. The very fact that sin is here, that men are allowed to go on in their shame and rebellion, that the wicked are not blasted by lightning, or burnt by fire, or scorched by the divine anger, are the greatest possible evidences of the goodness of our God.

Where is there another being who would stand by and have his day profaned, his name blasphemed, his courts desecrated, his law trampled under foot, his counsel spurned, and men actually defying him to his face? How do we put down rebellion? How do we put down treason? How do we put down willfulness and disobedience and treachery? Why, we have no mercy whatever. We shoot and hang and imprison and fine and punish until we compel submission. We insist upon absolute obedience to the law. In the right hand of Justice we put a sword, in the left hand we place the scales, over the eyes we tie a bandage, so that there may be no partiality, and by this figure we typify the sternness and inflexibility of our government. But what if God were to govern after this manner? With His power, His resources, His messengers of light and fire, His command of forces so vast and mysterious that they cannot even be numbered, how fearfully He could execute His will upon the nations, and how swift and terrible would be His justice! O, how true are the words of the prophet, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

So, then, instead of this problem of evil disturbing and exciting your mind, causing you sometimes to ask in your perplexity, "Doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?" let it rather comfort and strengthen you. For God does know; He knows ten thousand times more of it than we can ever know; He knows things that we cannot possibly know; but so great is His mercy, so wonderful is His kindness, so boundless is His compassion, so infinite is His goodness, that He withholds the bolts of

eternal justice and tries to save guilty men from awful wrath and punishment. You believe in God? Yes, and you have a right to believe in God, in a God who is supremely good; for if He was in anywise subject to the passions that flame within the minds of men, if by any means malevolence or hatred or even anger could be aroused in His breast, that moment this guilty world, with its myriads of reckless, daring, impious men and women, would be hurled to desolation and destruction.

“I believe in God the Father.” That word “Father” has attached to it a meaning so definite and simple as to bring it at once within our comprehension. When we speak of God we are lost in the immensities and infinitudes which open on every hand. “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven: what canst thou do? deeper than hell: what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.” And though this cry comes to us from the Book of Job, one of the first books that was written, yet it is as true now as it ever was. Yea, it is more true; for the discoveries of science, great and wonderful as they are, have only made the majesty and glory of God more awful and mysterious. Job and David saw the heavens with naked eye, and to them only a few stars shone in the night, and of these they knew nothing except that they were mere specks and points of brightness gleaming here and there in the darkness; but now through the giant telescopes the heavens blaze and shine and burn with a glory that is indescribable; vast spaces are as oceans of

light into which unnumbered suns pour themselves, and the wealth, the magnificence, the stupendous grandeur of the sky amaze and thrill all who look thereon. And so it is with the earth. What did the ancients know about this world? They simply dug a few inches into its surface, planting their simple roots, and they paddled their little boats within a few feet of its shores, but of the earth itself, and of the vast mysterious forces which were hidden in it, they knew absolutely nothing. But now almost every day brings some new invention or discovery, and these inventions and discoveries, instead of bringing us nearer to God, only cause the distance to be more immeasurable. Just as if we were journeying along a dusty road and a carriage should overtake us, and so simple and unassuming is the appearance of the owner that we have no hesitation in asking for a place beside him, and soon are engaged in familiar conversation. But, as we travel toward the city, we notice with wonder the respect with which the man is treated, and the amazing looks which are bestowed upon us. These things cause us to be less familiar, and the words which at first came without hesitation are now comparatively few and spoken with fear and embarrassment. And then, as the carriage rolls on, the signs of respect and deference multiply, until at length we come to the gates of a royal palace, where the guards salute, the band plays, and all at once we realize that we have been talking to the king. Instantly we feel how great has been our presumption, and he who in the beginning seemed little better than ourselves now has a kingly greatness which like a great gulf separates us one from the other. So in the be-

ginning men did with God, for they knew nothing of His greatness or majesty or power. But as the ages rolled by, and the riches of His glory became more apparent, men began to understand something of the greatness of His being and character, until now, when we can see and know and comprehend, in some measure, the wonders of His creative power and genius, we are lost in amazement and awe and reverence. You remember how this impressed Sir Isaac Newton, who became so conscious of the majesty and power of God after he had made his discovery of the law of gravitation, and through this law the harmony of the universe, that ever after he never even pronounced the name of God without reverently uncovering his head and so modulating his voice as to express homage and worship.

The more we know of nature, and the more we grasp the wonderful laws and forces that are in the material world, the greater is the mystery of God, and vaster still is the distance that separates Him from us. Hence, then, we have strong reason for gratitude that the word "Father" is here, for that we can comprehend. We know what it means and what it implies. We know that a father loves his children, protects them, provides for them, educates them, trains them, and that he leaves nothing undone that will promote their comfort and well-being. All this we know. We see it all around us. And there is nothing in life that is more wonderful or more beautiful than the patience, the devotion, the self-sacrifice with which men labor for their children. And that feeling the children understand and return by a confidence in the father's love and protection that is simply boundless.

That little child who was startled in the night by the shriek of the winds and the fury of the waves as they dashed against the side of the ship merely asked the question, "Is father on deck?" and when told that he was, nestled his head in the pillow and fell asleep again. This is the idea of fatherhood, and this idea prevails everywhere. So, then, this great Being, the Almighty, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is in our creed spoken of as "Father," and it is as a Father that He would have us honor and love Him.

You believe in the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth? This you cannot help but believe if you are in your right mind, for you see the stars gleaming in the sky, the sun flashing his glory from the heavens, the ocean heaving in tumultuous grandeur, the harvests waving in the autumn winds, and your own sense of reason tells you that back of creation is the Creator, for "Nature is but the name for an effect whose Cause is God."

And you also believe in the goodness of God. Nor can you help but believe this when you look upon this guilty, wandering world, in which, "though sin abounds, grace much more abounds." For do you not see everywhere divine mercy and long-suffering and compassion which are infinite in degree. For thousands of years these qualities of grace and mercy have been manifested, until even in heaven the saints from under the altar cry out in wonder, "How long, O Lord?"

But can you say, "I believe in God the Father?" My Father! My kind, gracious, tender, loving Father! The Father who is providing for my every want; who

is watching over me with a care and solicitude which never fail ; who is protecting me with all the angels of His grace and providence ; who listens to my cries for help and pardon, and is ready to do for me even more than I ask or think ! Can you say this ? Can you say it from the depths of your heart ? Think well before you answer these questions. It is one thing to repeat the Apostles' Creed ; it is another thing, and a far different thing, to believe it. O, may the Holy Spirit so influence each one of us that we can say honestly, "I believe in God the Father Almighty !"

“ Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed : and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”—1 Cor. xii, 3.

II.

“And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord.”

NOTHING is more important in the formation of character and the conduct of life than belief. Everything depends upon the creed which a person holds. The life that manifests itself in deeds, in words, in that which we can see and feel and hear, is the result of the belief upon which that life is based; and no more certainly does the keel underlie the ship, or the foundation support the house, than that creed determines conduct, and doctrine controls destiny. What is that beautiful flower with its wondrously tinted leaf, its exquisite form and pose, and its rich, yet delicate fragrance; or that noxious weed, unpleasant to the eye, to the touch, to the taste; but the life and sap which have attained fruition, and are clothing in visible form the principles which that plant had hidden in its breast. Indeed, for that matter everything in nature is but the expression of our inward life. And so exactly in our world—the world of conduct and character, the world of ambition and desire, the world of action and speech—everything that we see and hear and know and feel is the direct result of actual and positive belief. The business man believes in success, he believes that it is attainable, he believes that some time in life he may realize a competence and possibly a fortune, and because he believes this, he works with an energy and devotion

which are often amazing. The inventor believes in the ultimate adoption and triumph of his discovery; he feels confident that the principles and forces which he has brought into play are wise and sound; and because he believes this he will sacrifice ease, comfort, enjoyment, he will endure the rebuffs and disappointments to which he is subjected, and go on in sure and certain hope to the end. The world, as it now stands, and everything in it, is the result of belief, and just as apples grow upon trees, and corn upon stocks, so do all these visible things grow out of the invisible.

So then we repeat that nothing is more important than a person's belief, for that belief shapes character, molds destiny, and not only influences, but controls, the whole life. Now, in the creed known as the Apostles' Creed, we have a declaration of faith in which all of Christendom unites. And here, first of all, we cannot but notice how universal is the belief in the *unseen*. Millions in all parts of the world to-day have united in saying, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord;" and yet not a solitary person of that vast multitude has ever seen either God the Father, or Christ the Son; for Christ has not been visible to mortal eye for nearly two thousand years, while of God it is distinctly stated that no man hath seen Him or can see Him. We can see the church, this printed page, these hymns of praise, but here the eye stops; it can go no farther; all else is beyond the reach of mortal vision; and yet this very day hundreds of millions of people—people who represent the highest culture,

the deepest learning, the broadest civilization—have declared their faith not simply in the visible, but the invisible, and have worshiped at the shrine of the unseen!

But has it ever occurred to you that the only real things in this world are the unseen things? Have you ever seen truth? Have you ever seen love? Have you ever seen honor, or integrity, or righteousness? Have you ever seen mercy, or justice, or patriotism? Why, the very things that hold life together are unseen. The things that maintain the household are unseen. The things that prevent society from falling into anarchy are unseen. The principles for which men die on the battlefield are unseen; and the only use that we have for things that are seen, is that they may give form and expression to the things which are not seen. If there were any means by which we could take out of our hearts the unseen principles upon which our characters are based, there would be nothing left worthy of a moment's consideration.

It is well for us to think about these things, for there are some who are asking how can we worship a Being whom we have never seen? how can we believe in a Saviour who is in the realm of the invisible? and yet these same men are under the control of motives, affections, sympathies, ambitions, desires, feelings, purposes, hopes, every one of which is as invisible as God, and which never has been seen by mortal eye. Even more than this: we may see force applied as a belt from a pulley, or a wire from a battery, but we never saw the force itself; we may see what the light reveals, but the light itself is beyond our

vision ; we may see the tiny hammer strike the wire, but we never saw the sound ; we may see the word printed on the page, but we never saw the thought which inspired it ; we may see the fruit hanging on the tree, but we never saw the life by which that fruit came into being.

And so we are living now in the realm of the unseen, and therefore it is easy for us to worship a Being who is unseen ; for such worship is but the invisible and the spiritual which are within us, holding communion with the invisible and the spiritual which are around us and above us.

In the second article of this incomparable creed we say, "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord," and when the question of our acceptance is asked, we are all ready to answer, "All this I steadfastly believe." But this may mean more than we think. It will be wise for us to pause here a moment or two and see what this faith involves. It seems a simple expression, but when you look at it carefully, when you try to ascertain its depth and meaning and see what it implies, you make the discovery that these few words contain the whole Bible, and you cannot repeat them from the heart without accepting this entire revelation. What does the word "Jesus" mean ? It means Saviour, and that one word opens up the whole plan of the atonement by which God in Christ would reconcile the world unto Himself. You remember that it was prophesied of Him in the days of the advent, nearly nineteen hundred years ago : "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." It was for that purpose that He came into the world ; for that purpose He

lived here; for that purpose He died here. Here was a Being throned in the eternal glory, adored by the angels, worshiped by the heavenly host, and yet all that He put aside and came down here among men that in His own body He might bear their sins, and in their stead suffer on the accursed tree. Peter the Great, of Russia, laid aside the trappings of his royalty, and for a time worked as a common mechanic in an English navy yard, that he might learn the trade of a shipbuilder and thus teach the workmen in his own land. It was a brave, a noble thing to do, and his name is worthy of the honor in which Russia will ever hold it. But what if Peter had been taken by his own people, and for years compelled to endure every possible indignity and scorn, reviled, rejected, despised, cast out of the city, compelled to flee for his life, and then finally crucified within sight of his own palace! How all Europe and all the world would have cried out against such inhumanity and ingratitude!

Some years ago a young man stood on a public square in Liverpool in which a building was in flames. It was the Seaman's Home, and in it were many sailors and orphans who were startled from their midnight sleep by the awful cry of fire. Those on the lower floors were rescued with comparative ease, but the flames spread rapidly, and those who were higher up were cut off from the stairways by the blinding smoke and the leaping fire. They pressed to the windows, looking wistfully upon the horror-stricken multitude, who cried out in despair when they saw that the fire escape was too short to reach the floor where the unfortunate men were gathered. There was no

hope anywhere, when this young man dashed through the crowd, and grasping a ladder which lay on the ground, he made his way to the top of the fire escape. Then raising that ladder over his head until it reached the window sill above, he braced himself as with the strength of a giant, and there he stood while the hapless men and boys made their way down that ladder over his body, and by an act which made all England ring with his praises, saved them every one. But what if, when he came to the ground, he had been spurned, spat upon, made sport of, and finally trampled under foot, his life blood bespattering the very stones where he had saved the others? Would the world ever forgive such a shame and degradation? And yet all this, and infinitely more, is implied in the word "Jesus." For "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." He was despised and rejected of men, and the very world which He came to save, in order to show its hatred and cruelty, crucified Him between two common thieves, and left Him there to die.

Jesus—Saviour. Saviour from guilt and sin and degradation. Saviour from evil and temptation and despair. Saviour from wrath and cruelty and hatred. Saviour from death and fear and hell. Saviour from passion and lust and desire. Saviour from pride and avarice and ambition. Saviour from strife and wretchedness and despair. Saviour from everything that is vile and unholy and degrading.

Is this what the word means to you? And when you repeat, "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord," does it mean that He is your personal Saviour? And unless it does mean this, the repetition of the

creed is nothing more than sounding brass or tinkling cymbal.

But you also added "Christ" to this expression of your faith. Did you think when you were doing this that you were embracing the entire Mosaic economy, and making yourself a sharer in the hopes and prophecies of the ancient Hebrews? And yet this is actually the case; for the very moment that you announced your faith in Christ, the doors of the Jewish dispensation were opened, and by faith you saw Abraham preparing to offer Isaac upon the Mount of Sacrifice; you saw the high priest enter within the holy of holies to make intercession for the sins of the people, and everything that made the Jewish ritual so typical and so impressive became at once your personal and spiritual possession. In your office, or store, or counting house, there is a safe—a safe with great iron doors so heavy that it takes well nigh your full strength to draw them back, and which, when closed, make that safe fireproof and burglar proof, so that everything within it is guaranteed almost perfect security. But a receptacle that holds the secrets of your business, and which contains so much that is valuable, must not be opened by any common key which any locksmith can furnish; it must have a key all its own; and so the lock has its combination, and no person without that combination, though he work for hours, can cause the springs to recoil and the bolts to throw themselves back. Now the Old Testament is just such a safe; in it there are covenants made between God and man; there are contracts regularly drawn up, duly signed, and attested; there are promissory notes with a definite date for their

maturity ; there are deeds of gift properly executed ; there is the complete family history, beginning with the first mention of the name on down to the end ; there are the conditions clearly stated upon which the property is to be held ; there is the entire record of all of the transactions which have taken place for four thousand years ; there are the most positive instructions as to how everything should be done. All these things are in this safe, but the doors are closed, the bolts are in the sockets, and unless you have the combination that safe will remain a sealed mystery, and there is no way whereby you can reach its contents. Now "Christ" is the combination, and when you use that word these doors will open, and you will see and know and understand all that is here. Christ explains the blood that drips upon the altar where the lamb had been sacrificed ; Christ explains the bread which fell from heaven ; Christ explains the brazen serpent on the rod ; Christ explains the high priest on the day of atonement, laying his hand on the scapegoat and sending the poor beast into the wilderness ; Christ explains the mystery of the wanderings in the desert, and the coming finally to the land of Canaan ; and the very things which have caused us at times to wonder as to what they meant, are all simple and easy when we see them in His light and study them in His presence. No man has the faintest idea of what the Old Testament means unless he understands it through Christ. It is nothing but an iron safe with closed doors, and he has lost the combination.

You say you believe in Christ. Then you believe in the great plans of God reaching through thousands and thousands of years. Then you believe in the

prophecies of the coming Messiah which were given to the Jewish nation. Then you believe in the psalms of David, in the predictions of Isaiah, in the visions of Ezekiel, in the prayers of Daniel, in the sorrows of Jeremiah, and in all the hopes and yearnings of that nation from the days of Abraham to the days of Malachi. Just as the rainbow arches the sky, reaching from one mountain top to the other, and covering with glory all that lies between, so this word "Christ" in its divine light and meaning spans the millenniums which this Old Testament includes, and makes vivid every hope and promise that was given to the fathers. And so believing in Him, all this wealth of symbol and type and prophecy is yours, and the sky of your soul is studded with stars brighter than that by which the wise men were led to the place where they saw their Lord and King.

But in this declaration of your faith you used another word, "Lord"—"Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord"—"Lord" is a Saxon word, and signifies ruler, governor, and in the Scriptures is often used for the Hebrew Jehovah. It always implies authority, sovereignty, dominion, and when applied to Christ relates to His power and lordship. Your assent to this, therefore, means that you believe in His essential divinity and oneness with the Godhead, and that you accept Him as "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." This involves of necessity your belief in the great and wondrous doctrine of the Divine Incarnation, "God manifest in the flesh." So, then, when you say "Lord," in Christ you see not only a perfect man, living the most beautiful and gracious life that this world has ever seen, and a life which

grows richer and greater the more it is studied, but you see also one in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead, and who in His character and attributes was the express image of the Father. When you say Lord, you mean that Christ is the Ruler, the King, the Sovereign of all things visible and invisible, and "that He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." As you look into the significance of this word "Lord" you cannot but realize the force of our text, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Of ourselves, of our own individual reason, by the mere apprehension of the intellect, it would be impossible for any man to grasp the great truth, that Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, the Carpenter of Nazareth, the Prophet of Galilee, the Sufferer of Calvary, is the Ruler of earth and sky, the Lord and Sovereign of the universe. There is not in human thought the strength to realize this mystery of grace. You must have a power, an illumination, by which this can be made clear, for no matter how vivid the imagination, or strong the intellectual faculties, there is no way for anyone to comprehend what St. Paul calls "the mystery of godliness" by human reason and intelligence. You have seen slides for the stereopticon. You remember how small they were, only a few inches in length, and even less in breadth. Upon these tiny plates of glass a picture is made, but though your fingers were ever so sensitive, yet by the power of touch it would be simply impossible for you to trace even the most remote outline of that picture. Suppose, then, that you were in a darkened room, and asked what that plate of glass contained, how utterly lost you would be! But when that plate is put under

the influence of the intense flame and brought to a proper focus, how clear and beautiful it reveals itself ! The mountains are lifted up against the sky ; the trees are robed in living green ; the river sparkles in the sun, or gleams in the silven moon, and everything is brought out with marvelous beauty and accuracy. So when the Holy Ghost comes into the soul, when the divine light fills and illumines the heart, these tracings and lines which aforetime were so mysterious, instantly have a meaning, and we are able to realize and comprehend that which before was utterly beyond our thought.

You say, then, that "Jesus is the Lord." You say it. You say it not merely with the mouth, but with the heart. You repeat it not simply as the creed of the Church, but as the faith of your soul. You say it with all the intention and sincerity of which you are capable, knowing well the force and meaning of the word. Then, if so, the Holy Ghost must have come to you, for no man can say this "but by the Holy Ghost." Would it not be well to ask ourselves in profound seriousness, Can I really say the Apostles' Creed ? Can I say that "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord"—Jesus the Saviour, Christ the Messiah, Lord of life and glory ? Can I say that Jesus is my Saviour, that Christ is my Messiah, and that He is the Lord of my life, the King and Sovereign of my being ?

“The first man is of the earth, earthy : the second man is the Lord from heaven.”—1 Cor. xv, 47.

III.

“Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.”

THE complaint that is most frequently made concerning religion is that it is altogether a mystery ; that it puts its entire stress upon faith ; that it virtually ignores the faculties of reason, and that in order to accept it we must lay aside our calm, sober judgment, and compel ourselves to believe the unbelievable. Hence many resent this, boldly affirming that anything which cannot be reasonably apprehended has no claim upon human intelligence, and, therefore, should be put aside as unworthy of serious attention. And, from a certain standpoint, this would seem to be a just conclusion. What would you think of a careful, experienced sea captain, to whom was intrusted the responsibility of a noble ship, with its scores and hundreds of lives and its almost priceless cargo, being asked to give up the command of his vessel, not to one as wise and as well trained as himself, but to one in whose judgment he had no confidence whatever, and whom he knew to be reckless, thoughtless, courageous undoubtedly, but without either the skill or the caution for such a duty as this ? Such a man would hesitate even if the order was imperative, and would only surrender his command at the bidding of absolute authority. Now, that is the way in which many people think of religion. They look upon faith as something that is reckless

and visionary. They look upon religion as a matter that concerns the emotions and the imagination, and while they are willing to concede the heroism and devotion of many who accept the Gospel, still they are not willing to put the command of their life into the hands of mere enthusiasm and excitement. And it has always been so. "Behold, this dreamer cometh," was said of Joseph because he had visions that inspired his soul with hope and lifted him above the narrow, sordid life in which his brothers were content to dwell. "What will this babbler say?" was the contemptuous question that the proud Athenians asked of St. Paul because he had spoken to them of Christ and His resurrection. And though Christians are not spoken of publicly in this way, still, if we could only get to the real thoughts of many men, we would find that they looked upon religious people much as dreamers and babblers—dreamers dreaming of the impossible, dreaming of ideals of life and character which never can be realized, dreaming of a world which exists only in their imagination, and then babbling of these things in language as broken and visionary as the things of which they dream. Men tell us that they want real things, things that they can reason out, that they can understand, not things that float in the air, baseless fabrics that have no existence except in our heated minds.

Why are not our churches crowded to the door? Why is not every seat occupied at every service, and our churches three times, or even ten times, more numerous than they are? Is it because there is anything lacking in the order of our services, that the music is not in harmony with the more highly cultivated taste

of this day, that the sermons are not sufficiently intellectual to meet the requirements of these times? O no! These are not the reasons; people may say they are, and bring them forward as a paltry excuse, but the true reason is in the simple fact that men do not believe that religion is a real thing; they think that it is a mixture of poetry, romance, sentiment, superstition, harmless in its way, but that it is utterly shadowy and mysterious, and has no foundation in absolute and positive reality.

Does anyone mean to say that if people believed in the Bible they would allow its pages to remain closed, paying less attention to it than almost any other volume in literature? Does anyone mean to say that if men believed in God, in His power, in His justice, in His goodness, that they would live on for years without asking His help and blessing? We may say what we please, and give scores of reasons why people are not religious, but the real reason is in the fact that people do not believe in religion, and at heart are little if anything better than atheists. And all because of its mystery. Because they cannot understand it. And yet—and this is the most extraordinary thing in connection with the whole matter—the mystery is not in religion at all, but in the things outside of religion; and a man has to exercise more faith, more credulity, more imagination to do without religion, infinitely more, than he requires to accept every article in the Apostles' Creed. He doesn't "believe in God the Father Almighty." Then upon what basis does he explain the heavens and the earth? He must have some basis. Rejecting the creed because of its mystery, he must have something

that will satisfy his reason. \ What is that something? He sees order, beauty, harmony, arrangement. He sees stars whose movements are so perfect that no mechanism on the earth can compare with them. He sees a universe in which everything is so arranged that without a jar or a tremble these vast bodies move in their orbits, describing circles of almost infinite compass and perfection. How does he explain all this? The Christian has no trouble, because he believes "in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," and so there is neither doubt nor mystery in his mind; but for the man who will not accept the creed there is a vast mystery, and the mystery only deepens as the greatness and grandeur of the heavens and the earth become more apparent. Which, then, is the easier, to believe in a Creator and thus account for creation, or believe in a creation without a Creator? To believe that a ship originally came from the yard of the builder, or to believe that it dropped in some marvelous way from the heavens or worked its way up from the boundless deep—of the two, which requires the greater faith? Which appeals the more strongly to the reason?

And so of the man who cannot accept the second article of the creed, and who declares that to believe in Jesus Christ our Lord is not possible to his reason: how is he going to explain the conditions which exist all about him? He sees poverty, wretchedness, misery, crime, shame, sin, drunkenness; he sees virtue, goodness, truth, honesty, uprightness, temperance; he sees a world in which there run, like two mighty rivers, the good and the bad—the good clear, sparkling, bright, peaceful, moving on full of grace and bless-

ing; the bad black, foul, polluted, degrading, bearing with it curses and misery—in a word, he sees the problem of evil, the mystery of sin, and how is he going to explain all these things in harmony with what he calls the principles of reason? The Christian has no difficulty here, for he accepts the story of the first man who was of the earth earthy, who fell from his original estate by reason of disobedience, and who entailed upon posterity the woe and burden of his sin; and he accepts also the story of “the second man, the Lord from heaven,” who came to this earth as the anointed of God, as the Saviour of men; and in the world he sees how the good of the one is overcoming the evil of the other, and in the end righteousness must prevail. But what is the man going to do who refuses to accept the creed? What explanation has he to offer? He sees the conflict between badness and goodness. He sees the bitter struggle between right and wrong. He sees conscience defeated in one case, and he sees conscience victorious in another case. What is the solution of the difficulty? So, then, which is easier to believe—that an army of automatons, who after automatically making themselves marched automatically into the battlefield, where another army of like character had mysteriously assembled, when they proceeded at once to automatically kill each other? or that an army of good men, under the command of a divine leader and captain, marched forth to contend for truth and honor and righteousness? The man who cannot accept the first article of this creed has a creation, but no creator; and the man who cannot accept the second article has a world black with sin, but no saviour to

bring salvation. And so we repeat that the mystery of life and the mystery of the world is not in religion, but in the absence of religion, for religion is the only thing in all the earth that throws any light upon the problems and questions by which we are surrounded. And then to have men refuse to accept it because of its mystery! What would you think of a man groping his way through the Roman catacombs without a ray of light in that awful darkness, and with each step becoming more hopeless and involved in his wanderings, but when just about to give up in despair he sees in the distance a waxen taper lifting up its grateful flame amid that dreadful gloom, and which had been placed there in order to save such unfortunates as himself from a living death, and which, if taken, can help him to read the marks and inscriptions and lead him eventually to light and liberty; and yet, because he doesn't understand the principle of combustion, how wax and wick can unite in fire, how fire can overcome blackness deeper than night, he refuses to accept any light from the taper, and either blows it out or turns away into tunnels and subways where the darkness is yet blacker, and from which no escape is possible? And yet that is what men in these days would call following the principles of reason! Reason, forsooth! it is rank idiocy, and the man who would be guilty of such folly has no claim upon either sympathy or pity. And so we repeat again that the mystery of this world is not in religion, but in the absence of religion, for though religion, like the light, may have laws and principles which we can neither analyze nor compound, yet also, like the light, it opens up our way out of every

difficulty and makes of life not a black, shapeless mass, but a crystal transparency through which we may see the plans and purposes of God.

Possibly you may wonder why so much time has been spent in introducing this third article of our creed. Simply because this article is the one of all others which men regard as mysterious, and concerning which there is the most positive unbelief; and yet it is the very article which should be most readily accepted because it is the easiest, the simplest, and most perfectly natural of anything that could be imagined. The more you study the Incarnation the more you will be impressed, not with its mystery, but with its simplicity, and the more readily you will see how it reconciles itself with every principle of human reason.

When some wide river is to be spanned by a noble bridge, it is of the utmost importance that the towers or piers on either side be of such character, as that they will maintain the mighty arch which eventually must rest upon them. And in strength and quality of resistance these towers must be equal, for in such structures the weight and pressure come from the center, and the distribution is the same on either side. The bridge itself is a matter of simple construction once the towers are guaranteed, hence the engineers spare neither trouble nor expense in this part of the work. We have a perfect illustration of this in that wondrous creation which we can see some of us from our own windows, and over which some of us cross almost every day.

And so in the plan of redemption. There was a broad, black abyss separating God from man and

man from God, and the justice of the one and the sin of the other prevented either from marching across this mighty abyss, for how could God save men who had no desire to be saved, or bring men to heaven who were unfit for heaven? and how could man—weak, helpless, sinful—span the awful gulf which lay between him and the infinite and eternal God? How, then, could a way be opened, an arch be suspended, that would touch both God and man, strong enough at either end to bear the weight of the center! Nothing but a perfect union of the divine and human could do this. On the godward side there must be perfect divinity, on the manward side there must be perfect humanity, and from these towers, the one resting on earth, the other resting in heaven, there is the arch of an Incarnate God, and thus divinity reaches humanity and humanity attains divinity. Do we not see this idea expressed in the Scriptures, where Christ is spoken of as “the chief corner stone;” the stone that meets and holds both walls, the wall of absolute Deity, the wall of absolute humanity, thus representing in Himself the infinite perfections of God united with every quality and attribute of man.

So then this article of our faith means, first of all, that Jesus was inherently and essentially divine. He was God manifest in the flesh. In Him dwelt all of “the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” He was not, as some would have us think, a representative of God or a messenger from God charged with a divine mission. He was God Himself, for does not our text say that “the second man is the Lord from heaven.” And does not His life prove this? Putting aside the miracles and

His wonderful power over nature, have we not in Himself the evidence of His divinity, for does not He stand out as the only Man of the whole human race who was absolutely pure and sinless? The most searching investigation, the most cruel and merciless criticism, the most persistent and malignant inquiry, have all resulted in the same thing, and no one, not even the utterly blasphemous and reckless, has found a single defect in His character or flaw in His life. Even Pilate was constrained to say, "I find no fault in Him at all," while the centurion at the cross was led to exclaim, "Truly, this was the Son of God."

Nor have we only the purity of His life, but we have the purity of His teaching. Every word that drops from His lips is as clear as the light that streams through the quivering sky, and never once did error mingle with His truth. For now over eighteen centuries His Gospel has been in the world; it has been read in all languages, studied in all nations, examined by the keenest minds, exposed to the most critical scholarship, each word held up to the light and looked at in every form and meaning, and yet not once has there been found in it the faintest tinge of impurity or weakness; whiter than snow, clearer than light, more transparent than crystal, is that Gospel which He gave to men. And remember that only of the Gospel can this be said. So, then, when we see a life that is absolutely sinless, and a Gospel that is absolutely sinless, are we not compelled to believe that He was indeed the Lord from heaven? Some people spend a good deal of their time and strength in showing how great was the power of Christ, and they refer to His miracles upon the sea

and upon the land, and upon the blind and upon the dead; but this is like going into some big factory, and away yonder on the upper floor you see a machine doing some wonderful work, and you say how marvelous, how extraordinary this is! And you go to another, and another, and you see things that excite your unbounded amazement. But as you look overhead you see the shaft from which the belts are carried, and as you follow that shaft you see its connections with the power that runs through the whole building, and as you follow the connections you come to the great engine with its massive stroke and mighty cylinder, and you easily understand how the machines are able to do what you thought was so wonderful. Just accept the simple statement that "the second man is the Lord from heaven," and the whole framework of mystery and miracle in which His life was set, instead of awakening astonishment, is seen to be the easy and natural result of power so divine and unlimited as His. We have an illustration of this in His early ministry. You remember that a poor, helpless cripple was brought to Him, and when some of those who were standing by marveled because he said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," He merely turned to them and said, "Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or Arise, take up thy bed and walk?" His power was the same in either case. He could heal the soul or heal the body with the same infinite ease. And do we not see all through His life the same simple, absolute control of every force and principle. Indeed, to speak carefully, Christ never performed any miracle. It was undoubtedly a miracle to those who were looking on, but to

Him it was no miracle. He merely spoke and the sea fell back and the winds died away. He only raised his voice, and the dead Lazarus came back to life. You never see any strain, any labor, any exertion on His part. And why should there be? He was "the Lord from heaven," and these things that excited the wonder and amazement of men were the simple expressions of His will. How could anything be a miracle to Him when even the heavens are only the work of His *fingers*? Once we get into our mind the thought of our text, that "the second man is the Lord from heaven," everything He did, everything He said, is no longer either a marvel or a mystery, but the simple manifestation of His eternal power and Godhead.

Then, in the second place, we are taught that He was clearly and distinctively man. "Born of the Virgin Mary." Divinity in humanity. Humanity enshrouding divinity. "How can this be?" men say. I will tell you, when you tell me, how a few ounces of matter called brain substance can contain pictures that reach across the sky, music that fills the very heavens, ships that sail the widest seas, armies that march through many lands, histories that travel down the centuries; tell me this, and then it will be easy to tell how divinity became humanity, how Godhead became manhood. If a man, weak, erring, frail, helpless, has the power to contain in himself a world—a world of earth and sky and sea; a world of life and history and power; a world of drama and music and art; a world of thought and ambition and affection—how easily we can see that God could, through a body of sinless humanity, so incarnate Himself as to in no

wise impair His essential divinity. There is no greater mystery involved in the incarnation of Christ than there is in the creation of Adam, or in the life of any human being on this earth. When men are prepared to tell how they think, how they feel, how they know, how they live ; when they are ready to explain the union of soul and body, the visible enshrouding the invisible, then it will be time to wonder at the mystery of the incarnation, but not until then.

“Born of the Virgin Mary.” Thank God for a divine yet human Saviour ; for one who is touched on all points with the feeling of our infirmities, yet without sin ; for one who stands to us in the relation of helper, brother, redeemer, friend ; and to whom we may go for grace in every time of need !

Blessed be God for a Saviour who is all powerful, all mighty, all glorious, and yet who stands at our side the Man of Sorrows, the helper of the helpless, and who bids us come to Him and rest !

Blessed be God for a Saviour who is divinely pure, infinitely and eternally holy, and in whose light there is no darkness at all ; and yet who knows how to pity them that are tempted, whose hand is ready to lift up the fallen, and to whom we may go with the burden and the shame and the sin !

This is what our creed means. And is this what it means to you ? Is this “second man, the Lord from heaven,” your Saviour, your elder Brother, your Lord and Redeemer and Friend ?

“When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person : see ye to it.”—Matt. xxvii, 24.

IV.

"Suffered under Pontius Pilate."

IN the heart of some giant rock—a rock strong enough to be in the foundations of a palace, or upon which a mighty pyramid could rest—it is no uncommon thing to find petrified in the stone the form of what was once a living thing. Under what circumstances this came to pass we can only conjecture. It may have been that ages and ages since that which is now stone and rock was then soft and plastic to the touch, and the beast or reptile venturing out upon the alluring surface was unable to retrace its steps and was swallowed in the fathomless mass. Or it is possible that the poor brute, weary with its wandering, lay down upon the earth, and fell into that deep sleep which we call death, when one of those tremendous upheavals took place, of which the geologist is wont to speak, and in the awful chasm nature provided a grave for its dead. But no matter how it came to pass the fact remains, and prisoned in the rock, held in a grasp that defies the strength of centuries, the forms of what were once full of life can now be plainly seen.

And so bedded in the heart of the creed of Christendom, a creed which has come to us down the ages and which will outlast the ages yet to come, we find the words "Suffered under Pontius Pilate," and just as the reptile has become fastened to the rock, until

it has grown into it and become a part of it, and separation is impossible, so have these words incorporated themselves into the life and being of the Church, and no power on earth can ever remove them. Little did that Roman governor think that he was dooming himself to such terrible immortality, and that his name would enter into the creed of the universal Church of Christ.

The rock in which the reptile is prisoned may be broken and the form disappear, but there is no such hope for Pilate, and down the ages those dreadful words will go, and will be only more impressive and significant as the centuries accumulate.

Of this man Pilate we know almost nothing. Tradition has much to say concerning him, but there is no dependence whatever to be placed on any of these legends. All we really know is that he was at this time Governor of Judea, a province which was attached to Syria, having Cæsarea for its capital, held in subjection by the Roman government, and from which Pilate derived his authority. Part of his name would suggest relationship with one of the most influential families of that time, while the other part would serve to indicate that he had come from the ranks of the "freedmen," but the exact facts in the case no one can determine. For six years he had held this position of governor, and that he was cruel and tyrannical, and also weak and vacillating, is known to every student of Roman history.

During the week of the passover it was the custom of those in authority to come to Jerusalem so as to maintain law and order among the vast multitudes who were wont to assemble at this time, and hence

Pilate is here, and so also is Herod, who had jurisdiction in Galilee.

On the eventful morning suggested by our text Pilate heard a great tumult just outside the palace walls, and he was at once on the alert, for he was responsible for the welfare of the city, and would have to give account to the authorities at Rome, when messengers came in with urgent request for his presence in the hall of judgment. Immediately he responded, and, on entering, a wondrous scene presented itself. Though it was still in the early morn a vast crowd had assembled, and with strange vehemence they were shouting, "Crucify him, crucify him!" their shouts referring to one who was bound a prisoner in their midst. Pilate looked and saw a young man whose countenance gave evidence of deep unutterable suffering, but who made no attempt to defend himself from his accusers. The silence of the one was in strange contrast with the noise and tumult of the others, and so Pilate instantly inquired what evil this man had done, and then he learned that this was Jesus, the famous teacher and prophet, of whom he had heard so much during the past three years. This was the man who had given eyesight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, strength to the palsied, healing to the leper, life to the dead. This was the man whose teaching was so profound and spiritual as to baffle the wisdom of the chief priests and scribes, and yet so simple and comforting as to attract multitudes of the common people. This was the man whose ministry was attended by such signs and wonders as were not seen since the days of the prophets, and which gave rise to the hope that He would be the

redeemer of Israel. The nature of this man's life was well known to Pilate, for his agents and spies were in all parts of the province, and he could not but be informed concerning Jesus of Nazareth. He had heard that when the people would make Him a king He had turned away from their proposal ; that, instead of mixing with the rich and the influential, He had gone to the homes of publicans and sinners ; that He was fearless, incorruptible, unselfish, loyal to the truth under every circumstance, and that nothing could lead Him a single hair's breadth from what He thought His duty. And so this man was his prisoner, brought here by the priests, under arrest by his own soldiers, and the crowd was clamoring for His death. We can then readily imagine that under all of these circumstances Pilate was deeply interested, and gave to Jesus the most prompt and eager attention. And if he had only been faithful to his trust and discharged his duty without fear of consequence how differently the world would regard him, and what a name and place he would have held in the estimation of mankind ! But Pilate was only a politician. He was not a statesman, nor a judge, nor even a military commander. Had he been stern, arbitrary, despotic, and acted under a sense of the demands of public duty and the necessity of quelling anything that threatened commotion and disturbance, then he might in a measure be forgiven, but in this case he was not impulsive, nor energetic, nor dictatorial ; he was simply politic from first to last, and it was his very policy that led to this fearful crime.

We see this in *his attempt to conciliate the priests and scribes*. He knew that Jesus was guilty of no

crime. He knew that it was only envy that prompted His arrest. He knew that under the Roman law there was no ground whatever for any one of these charges. He knew that His life was blameless, and that in point of fact His accusers were perjuring themselves, and yet he actually tried to win the favor of these men whom he despised in his heart, and for the sake of gaining their good will allowed shame and indignity to be put upon One whom he knew to be innocent. There are times when conciliation is wise, when "a soft answer turneth away wrath," and when a man is justified in trying by every means in his power to win friends for himself; but when any principle is involved, and the matter is one where compromise would affect character, then let a man take his stand upon that which he thinks right, and stand there like a great rock in the sea, fixed and immovable. No man makes a greater mistake than the one who tries to be on good terms with everyone. Such a man represents no convictions, no opinions, no principles. He means nothing to the Church, to the community, to the nation. He does not stand for truth, or honor, or righteousness. His life, though it be enriched with popularity and good-fellowship, is of no real value to the world. Had Martin Luther been a man of this type, there would never have been a Reformation; but when it came to a question of principle he said, "Here I stand; I can go no farther; God help me. Amen!" and in standing just where he did he gave Protestantism to Europe. And you will find that every great leader, every bold reformer, every noble character who has helped this world by his life and example, has had some critical hour when he had to

make a choice, and then follow out his own course irrespective of consequence or result. The great reason why so many of our lives are comparative failures is because we are too anxious to conciliate those who differ from us, or who are opposed to us. Instead of living under our own sky, walking in the light of our own conscience, doing that which we know to be right, and having the strength and courage of our convictions, we try in some way to bring about a compromise, lest we seem to give offense. We see evil; we see things which are contrary to every principle of the Gospel; we see corruption in our government, dishonesty in business, wrongs in social life, deceptions and subterfuges in society; but, instead of coming out boldly, fearlessly, uncompromisingly, as our Master did, we play the part of Pilate, and stifle the promptings of our own conscience. And so, like him, we are only cravens and cowards.

Then, again, you notice *his attempt to evade responsibility*. As soon as he learned that Jesus was of Galilee he sent Him to Herod, for Herod has jurisdiction of that part of the country. As a piece of political craft nothing could exceed this, for Pilate and Herod were at variance, and this recognition of Herod's authority would be accepted as a graceful compliment, and would doubtless tend to bring about a better understanding between these rival governors; and at the same time it would transfer the responsibility to some other one, and thus relieve him from a most ungracious and unpleasant duty. And in part it resulted as Pilate had expected, for it brought these two men together, and their differences for the time were forgotten. But how cowardly such a proceed-

ing was! Instead of accepting the responsibility, which was his by right, and meeting his obligations with the largeness and spirit of a man, he seeks by the policy of evasion to rid himself of the whole matter, and make Herod accountable for the results and consequences. And the politician is always a master in the art of evasion. When other men stand up and show their colors he, like the chameleon, takes his tint and hue from his surroundings. He seems to be first on one side and then on the other, always ready to receive praise, never willing to accept blame or accountability.

There is nothing more lamentable in the construction of the whole framework of society than this tendency of ours to evade what is our manifest duty, and put that burden upon some one else. Our city may fester until every street reeks like a charnel house, but no one seems to blame. One evil after the other may gather upon us, but we only look at each other in wonderment and say, "Who has done this thing?" Wrongs may multiply and accumulate until the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, but who is responsible?

It is not our fault that saloons are being added in amazing number, and that the tide of intemperance is rolling in like crimson waves from a sea of blood. It is not our fault that want and hunger and pauperism are wailing out their pitiful and heartrending cry, and that people are dying for lack of bread within sound of our church bells. It is not our fault that treacherous hands are stealing away the birthright of our children, and that the school which is fundamental to the nation's welfare is being throttled by merciless

fingers. It is not our fault that the country for which our fathers gave their life-blood is being overrun by the multitudes of the vicious and the ignorant, and that if such things go on there will be nothing left but a dim and distant memory. No one of these things is our fault. Ah ! it is another instance of Pilate seeking to evade his responsibility and putting the burden upon Herod. But such evasion, though crafty and politic and cunning, is weak and cowardly, and in the end unsuccessful, for Herod, though he mocked and made sport of the Just and Holy One, sent Him back to Pilate, and his scheme failed utterly. And so with us. We may try to shift the blame from our shoulders ; and we may say these matters do not belong to us ; but the time at length comes when we must face our responsibilities, and then it may be too late.

No, you cannot get rid of Jesus by sending Him to Herod. Every man must bear his own burden, and every man must give account of himself before God.

And then, again, you notice how by placing Christ and Barabbas before them *he tried to have them choose Jesus as the one who should be liberated at the feast.* Barabbas was a noted criminal, and for a time had made havoc upon the homes and hoards of the people, and there must have been great rejoicing when he was captured and cast into prison, there to meet the sentence of death to which his crimes had exposed him. And now this designing governor, though there were, doubtless, scores and hundreds of prisoners in the dungeons at this time, singles out the most notorious of them all, one whose name was a dread and byword, and by giving them the choice as between

the young Prophet of Nazareth and this cruel desperado, hopes to compel them to ask for Jesus, and thus relieve him from doing that which neither law nor conscience would justify. But Pilate did not understand the intensity of religious bigotry, nor the bitterness and intolerance which a distorted religion can produce. He did not know, as we do, that the fiercest wars that were ever fought between men, the most fearful cruelties that this world has ever seen perpetrated, the most dreadful horrors that were ever devised, have all been brought about through religion. He could not look down the coming centuries and see the Inquisition in Spain, the tortures of Italy, the massacres in France, the burning of men and women in England. If he had known, as we do, the hatred, the prejudice, the enmity which an intolerant and bigoted religion can produce, he would never have given them the choice which he did; but, thinking only for himself and what would serve his interests best, he allowed them to decide as between Barabbas and Jesus. And then, to his amazement, with a yell like that of wild animals who feel blood upon their lips, they cried, "Release Barabbas, crucify Jesus!" And that cry is still ringing in the world. Barabbas the robber; he who robs the life of its purity, the heart of its peace, the conscience of its light; he who robs the home of everything that is true and sweet and beautiful, and tramples honor and holiness under his cruel feet; he who robs youth of its grace, its tenderness, its innocence, and then flings his victims contemptuously from his hand to sorrow for the rest of their years; he who robs manhood of everything that tends to integrity and character, and

leaves it on the highway wounded and naked ; he who robs womanhood of all that would grace and adorn and ennoble, and makes her but a scorn and reproach ; he who robs the soul of its religion and would sink it in the deepest hell ; he, Barabbas the robber, is preferred even in this day to Jesus, the Son of God and the Saviour of men !

It is easy for us to denounce these men, to pour upon them our wrath and anger and indignation, and to say what we would have done had we been in their circumstance ; but what about the circumstance in which we are now, and what about the Barabbas who is preferred to the Jesus of this day ? For what is sin but Barabbas ? And he who makes the choice of sin and deliberately rejects the Gospel is even more guilty than this mad, howling mob, who were led away by their passions under the control of bigoted, unscrupulous priests. Our sin is far greater than theirs, for we have the light of the centuries shining full upon our path, and there are no doubts in our mind as to the lineage and kingship of the One who would fain be our Saviour. They were in darkness, and it is very possible that some of them in raising the cry for crucifixion may have been actuated by what they thought was right ; but we know better, and yet such is the hardness of our hearts that we willfully turn away from the One who came to bring us peace and pardon, and we take up with Barabbas the robber. Can you imagine anything more dreadful than the choice that so many are making ? and, though the Gospel has been doing its blessed work for all the centuries of this era, yet the multitude still cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas !" and they

are robbed of everything that makes life worth living and robbed of their heritage in the world to come.

And then we notice finally *his appeal to their traditions*. This is done when he calls for water and, in the presence of the multitude, washes his hands; by this act signifying that the consequences for this cruel deed would rest upon them, and not upon him. This was a custom among the Jews, and dated from the time of Moses; and was intended to meet cases where there was uncertainty as to who were the guilty parties. That must have been a thrilling scene when, after exhausting all the arts and pleas of which he was a consummate master, Pilate sent an attendant for a basin of water and then, in the presence of the people, proceeded to wash his hands. In doing this he virtually deposed himself from his office of governor, and for the moment puts the power into the hands of the people. Surely this will have the desired effect. It cannot be that they will assume the awful consequences which this act implied. An appeal to their own custom, one of the most sacred and impressive in their ritual, must restore them to a sense of justice and bring about the release of One in whom he found no fault at all, and who was undoubtedly innocent of every charge which had been made against Him. But, though Pilate had been for over six years governor of this Judean province, and had come frequently into conflict with the people, he failed to appreciate the fiendishness, the malignity, the merciless character of the Jewish race; for a more cruel and implacable people have never lived. From their father Abraham they derived that strength of character that would plunge the knife into their own son's heart, if

needs be, and from the wars of the olden time they inherited qualities that were as remorseless and ferocious as those of the savage. Had Pilate made his appeals in Rome, the blood of that splendid, warlike people would have responded at once; for the Roman was brave, magnanimous, chivalrous; and the same would have been true in Greece; but the Hebrew, from the time that Moses slew the Egyptian and buried his body in the sand, until we find Paul standing by while the men stone Stephen, has been as relentless in his hatred and as cruel in his vengeance as the most barbarous tribes in the heart of Central Africa. And so the hands were no sooner washed and the words of Pilate spoken than the cry went up, "His blood be on us and on our children;" and that blood has been on them and on their children. The Jew is the inheritor of a legacy of blood, and his history for the last nineteen centuries is one of horror and shame and persecution and death. But it is not with the Jew but with Pilate we are now dealing, and we see again how his arts and policies only led him into deeper trouble. Instead of finding the relief which he expected, he has only involved himself, and now he cannot recede. Had he been frank, honest, straightforward, the tragedy of the cross might in some way have been averted; at any rate, he would have been innocent in the matter; but being without guiding principle, without strength of character, without a firm, unswerving conscience, he was led on from one degree of evil to another until at last he, a Roman governor, the representative of that nation which gave to the world its best and purest laws, and which could fairly boast of its justice and impartiality,

actually handed over to punishment a man whom he knew to be innocent !

Friends, we are not to think of Pilate as a monster of iniquity, as a foul, cruel, vindictive tyrant, and as such hold him up to reprobation and scorn, for such charges would not be true. Indeed, from the story as told here in these gospels it is very evident that Pilate tried in many ways to save Jesus from the cross ; but he was weak, shifting, uncertain, unreliable ; he was crafty, but he was not wise ; he was politic, but he was not sincere ; his great thought was for himself, and not for the dignity of the office which he held ; and so, because of his craft and his policy and his selfishness, he became an instrument in the hands of evil men in bringing about the most awful crime in the history of the universe.

And you see how miserably he failed, for, though he tried to conciliate the Jews, yet charges were formulated against him, and he was deposed from his high office and condemned to banishment, and, according to tradition, at length committed suicide.

My brethren, just as the bell anchored on that lonely rock rings out its solemn warning, so from this sad story there come lessons which we should lay to heart. We see, first of all, the necessity of being true to our conscience and our sense of right.

We see, again, the utter folly of trying to win the good opinion of others by sacrifice of honor and of principle.

We see, also, that no evasion of responsibility for the time will avail us anything, and so the question is, "What shall we do then with Jesus who is called the Christ ?"

And we see, last of all, that though we wash our hands and make a parade of our innocence, unless our hearts are washed, we are in greater sin than before.

And now, during these days of the Passion Week, you will be brought face to face with Jesus. You will hear of Him, and read of Him, and you must think of Him. Will you treat Him as Pilate did, and for the sake of the world compromise your eternal interests? Will you treat Him as this multitude did, and have Barabbas instead? Or will you have Him for your Lord and Saviour and Friend?

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”—Phil. ii, 8.

V.

“Was crucified, dead, and buried.”

IN that splendid vision given to St. John on lonely Patmos, the Son of Man announced Himself as wearing upon His girdle the keys of death and hell, thus indicating the most perfect sovereignty in the realms of life and spirit. And that vision we are all prepared to accept as one which rightfully expresses the grandeur and exaltation of our blessed Lord. We can easily think of Jesus as enthroned in glory and honor, as the divine and majestic figure of the eternal paradise, as the One before whom the angels bow in deep reverence, and to whom the redeemed offer their gratitude and praise. We gratefully confess that no honors are too high for Him, no worship too exalted, no adoration too profound, and our hearts instinctively recognize in Him the Lord of earth and sky. Patmos, therefore, with the glory and magnificence which it reveals, comes within the range of our comprehension, and is in harmony with our conceptions of the eternal and divine Son. But when we come to such a passage as our text, and to the idea suggested in this article of our creed, we are overwhelmed, for the mystery of it—the deep, unfathomable mystery—so takes possession of us that our minds are utterly unable to comprehend these amazing declarations.

These words, “Was crucified, dead, and buried,” we are familiar with. We have heard them, and

repeated them times without number; they are among the most precious memories of our childhood; they are in our hearts, there to abide while life and memory endure; like a bell tolling sadly in the night, they suggest death and sorrow; when we come to speak them, we are awed and hushed; nothing in the faith of the Church touches us so deeply and so tenderly, and yet withal how little of their meanings do we realize, and how far short we fall of understanding anything of what they involve! Never were words so weighty, so solemn, so significant, as these. No other words ever fell from human lips of such dignity and import. They compass heaven and earth. They include Godhood and manhood. The highest act of Deity and the lowest act of humanity meet in this one sentence. The best that God could do and the worst that man could do are here. Here we have the finite man taking the most cruel and pitiless advantage of the infinite God. Here we have the tragedy of the world, of the universe, of the eternities.

It well becometh us, then, on Palm Sunday, the gateway into the Passion Week, to consider these deep and mysterious words; not, however, with the hope of understanding them, but rather that we may have fellowship with His sufferings who for us endured the cross, despising the shame.

There are two most important ideas connected with the death of our blessed Lord which must ever be borne in mind, and which make His death altogether distinct from that of any other in the history of mankind. First, it was purely voluntary. All men are born to die. The seeds of death are implanted at our

birth, and in due time those seeds will reveal themselves. No one is exempt. The only way to get into this world is to be born, and the only way to get out of it is to die. We may rail at fate in any way that we please, and seek to retard by every means in our power the flight of time; but through the gates of death we must go. From this sentence there is no appeal. "Death has passed upon all men." The law is inexorable. The time of that death may be delayed until old age and infirmities have come; but "Thus far and no farther" is the pitiless fiat, and beyond this no mortal can go. There is a line where science is utterly helpless, where wisdom is powerless, where neither wealth nor genius avails anything, where there is no choice whatever, and the king must lay aside his diadem, the warrior his sword, the statesman his portfolio, the merchant his ledger, the mechanic his tools, and the body return to its native dust. For thousands of years that law has been supreme, until the whole earth has become literally one vast mausoleum.

But upon Christ this law had no effect whatever. He declared that He "had power to lay down His life, and to take it up again;" and just as He came into this world of His own free will and choice, so in like manner did He leave it. And it is this which invests His death with such significance. For otherwise He could not have conquered death, death would have conquered Him, and His ashes would now be somewhere in the world; but by voluntarily meeting the grim, ruthless destroyer, by freely going down into the horror and despair of the grave, and then by His own power rising out of that darkness and mystery, He forever vanquished the implacable enemy of our

world, and thus "brought life and immortality to light through His blessed Gospel."

Second, His death was purely vicarious. He suffered in nowise for Himself. St. Paul tells us that "the sting of death is sin." "And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." But in Him there was no sin. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and though tempted in all points like as we are, He was without sin. His death, therefore, had no relation to that mysterious law which connects sin with the grave, for in divine and essential purity He was "made higher than the heavens."

Neither did He transgress any human law. His life as revealed in the gospels is one of gracious obedience to the laws, both of the temple and the nation. He distinctly said that He came not to break the law, but to fulfill it; and so we find Him observing the sacred feasts, attending the synagogues, paying tribute even to Cæsar, and in every way fulfilling all righteousness. So perfectly did he embody this principle of obedience that, when it came to His arraignment before Pilate, no fault was found in Him, and the Roman governor was constrained to say, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."

We see, therefore, that His death was not a punishment nor a penalty for anything of which he was guilty, but was purely vicarious, a suffering in the stead of others.

And now with these two thoughts clearly established in our minds—the voluntary and the vicarious character of this death—let us approach yet more

closely to the subjects suggested by this article of our creed.

“He was crucified!” “Crucified!” A death of indescribable horror and shame! A death of unspeakable ignominy and contempt! A death of torture so painful as to be the most degrading and barbarous punishment known among men! A death to which only the most foul and grievous offenders were condemned! And yet “He was crucified!” Well might the rocks rend themselves in agony, for on that day the world’s heart was broken. Well might darkness gather in the sky, for no sun in all the heavens could shine upon such a scene. Even among the angels there must have been silence and wonder; and, if tears are possible in paradise, the tragedy of the cross must have called them forth. “He was crucified”—the noblest, kindest, bravest, purest Being that this earth has ever known; that Son of Man, whose gracious life fills the whole world with its beauty, and whose ministry was of such infinite grace and tenderness; that divine Galilean, whose noble words have gone out upon their glorious mission of comfort and blessing, inspiring every soul that comes under their influence; that marvelous Teacher, whose wisdom was as infinite as His patience, and whose lessons have such wondrous meanings that no human genius can exhaust them; that divine Man, from whose lips there fell the most gracious and tender messages that human hearts had power to receive. “He was crucified!” The men to whom He came with His glorious Gospel—a Gospel of peace, of mercy, of pardon, of comfort, and a Gospel which arched across the darkness of sin and death as the bow spanning the heavens—actually

crucified Him, and that, too, between two common thieves, and there on the cross they left Him to die! O what a crime was that! Never was there such shocking ingratitude, such treachery, such wrong! With a splendid confidence in the loyalty and chivalry of men, He put aside the glory which He had with the Father and came down here that He might bless and help a poor, suffering world; and yet with a treachery which nothing can ever condone, with a cruelty as hellish as human malignity could devise, the very men whom He came to help actually took Him and on the hill of shame nailed Him to a cross! What would you think of an army that was hemmed in on every side so that escape was simply impossible; the enemy so intrenched that any attack was utterly futile; the provisions so exhausted that emaciation and famine were throwing their gaunt shadows everywhere, and the poor, wretched soldiers were the victims of the most abject despair; and yet, when a man of superlative courage breaks through the lines and comes to them with glad messages of hopes and promises of help, and tells them of a way by which they may escape, and offers to lead them through that way by which he has come and which he knows is safe, that army, instead of hailing him as a hero and deliverer, mocks him, insults him, throws back his offers with contempt, and finally in a frenzy of treachery and ingratitude treats him as a spy and hangs him in sight of the entire camp! Such a crime as that would call out the execration of all mankind, and such an army would well deserve the fate of cowards and traitors.

Or, what would you think of a ship struggling in tempest and darkness, caught upon the grinding rocks,

and being beaten to pieces by the remorseless sea. The boats are gone, and even if they had remained they would be useless in such fearful breakers. There is nothing but death for the unfortunate men, when all at once a figure is seen climbing up the ship's side, and having around his body the life line. With matchless daring and wondrous strength he had fought his way through the mad billows, beating them aside with his mighty arm, and now he has come, the bearer of hope and salvation; and yet no sooner do those sailors hear his words, than with one accord they deride him, they laugh him to scorn, and then as a climax to their shame and ingratitude they take the life line which he had brought, and with it strangle him to death! Have you the power to imagine such degradation and infamy possible to human beings? And yet all this, and infinitely more, is involved in the words, "He was crucified."

"Dead." For hours he hung upon that cross suffering agonies far beyond the power of mere mortals to comprehend. At his feet was His mother, the brave, devoted virgin mother, one of the noblest and sublimest of characters in the history of our world. And there in sight of that mother, who heard every word that fell from His lips, and whose soul was pierced by that wondrous cry which yet rings in the earth—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—He bore the awful agony which was put upon Him. In such an hour as this one would think that cruelty and malice would disappear, and that only pity could be seen; but as though nothing could be lacking to add to the shame and horror of the divine victim, taunts and scorn are put upon Him, and those that passed by

reviled Him, and said, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." And what is even more cruel, the chief priests and the elders and the scribes openly mocked Him, and said, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save."

But no word of reproach falls from those quivering lips. Never was Christ so superb and kingly as when upon the cross, and never did He so fully display the greatness and grandeur of His soul. He had but to wish, and that scene would have changed with a rapidity as that of lightning's flash. A word from Him, and a legion of angels would have revealed themselves, the taunting priests would have stood dumb in the presence of the mighty messengers of God, the soldiers would have fallen in abject fear before the glory and power of the spirit host, and the people would have cried out in terror; but the wish is not expressed, the word is not spoken, and without a murmur He remains there enduring all the agonies of that fearful day. Nor did He simply endure in grim, silent strength, but He even forgets Himself in caring for and ministering to others. He extends mercy to the poor thief who hangs upon the adjoining cross; He provides a home for the dear loving mother in whose arms He had nestled as a child; He breathes a wondrous prayer for the very men who had brought Him to His death; and when at length there was nothing more that He could do He said, "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost.

Dead! O, what a mystery is here, and how weak and helpless is the best thought of which we are capable. Dead! the firstborn of every creature. He by whom were all things created. And "in Him dwelt

all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Dead! and yet He had raised Lazarus from the dead!

But in what other way could He show how perfect was His identification with humanity than to allow death to pass upon Him? It was not enough that He was born of a woman; the supreme test of His absolute manhood was not in His birth, but in His death. Anything less than death would have left His mission incomplete, and taken away from His Gospel its essence and spirit. Had He ascended before the crucifixion, as He did afterward, He would have been remembered as a great teacher, a mighty prophet, a chosen messenger of God; but He would not have been loved, worshiped, adored, as He now is. But by His death He has put Himself into the most close and vital relations with the whole world, and when He asks us to follow Him, His cross is the pledge of a love that is stronger than death and of a sacrifice greater than our thought can compass. When Christ assumed our nature, and was made in the likeness of sinful men, He took upon Him everything that pertained to, or that was possible to, flesh and blood. Hence He was tempted, tempted so severely that He resisted unto blood striving against sin; hence He suffered, suffered every pang and burden and reproach to be found in life; hence He died, dying just as men die, a death absolute and complete. But O, how that death makes Him bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! "Verily He took not on Him the nature of angels;" but was made in all things "like unto His brethren." He consented even to the indignity of the cross and the humiliation of death rather than be separated from those whom He came to redeem.

“Buried !” Have you ever thought of all that is involved in that expression made concerning Joseph of Arimathea, “He went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus ?” We read that this Joseph was a secret disciple of Jesus, but for fear of the Jews did not openly espouse His cause, and there are those who have charged him with cowardice, but in the way that he comes forward at the last he has made full atonement for his former hesitation and fear ; for this act of his was more than kindly or tender ; it was heroic, it was noble, and forever entitles him to the gratitude of the world. And his treatment of that scarred and broken body deserves the most ample recognition from all who can appreciate honor and chivalry. Tenderly it is carried to his own tomb, and wrapped in spotless linen and embalmed with costly spices it is laid away to rest. And it surely needed rest. For three years it had given itself with unceasing devotion to the calls and the needs of men ; through the day it ministered with divine energy, teaching, preaching, healing, helping, blessing, and saving multitudes, and through the night it spent its strength in loneliness and prayer. No life that this world has ever seen was so unsparing in its toil, so ceaseless in its labors, so powerful in its ministry, and when at length that poor body had finished its work how sorely it needed the quiet and rest of the grave.

And so He was buried—buried in the earth, in the darkness, in the tomb—buried down here among men, in a world which He had made ! Yes, He was buried ! and the strangest, saddest, the most glorious and the most mysterious hours that the eternities have ever known, or ever will know, were those in which

the body of Jesus lay in the tomb. And of that burial there can be no doubt, for the stone was sealed, the watch was set, and the dead Christ was left in the darkness and mystery of the grave.

And now, when we take up the thoughts that were suggested in the early part of this discourse, and remember that this death was purely voluntary and purely vicarious, what can we think of, or how can we appreciate such a sacrifice as this? O, never does human thought seem so weak, or human words so expressionless, as when we attempt to reach the grandeur and meaning of the love of Christ to men! As well try to reach the stars with our fingers, or hold the mountains in our hands, as to compass with our poor thought the grace and mercy which are revealed in the humiliation of Christ! We may have our terms and theories as to the atonement; we may arrange our thoughts in order, and use certain forms and phrases of speech; we may so harmonize our expressions as to formulate some doctrine which we regard as fundamental to the Christian faith; but when all is said and done of which human genius is capable, just as the ocean in its majesty sweeps away the puny barriers which men erect, so out and beyond anything that we can imagine is this mystery of Godliness, in which Christ is "Crucified, dead, and buried."

But there is one thing that we do know, and that is, that this sacrifice was for us; that for us He endured the cross, despising the shame; that for our sins He died upon the tree. And this one thing is enough. For the rest let us be content to wait until we shall see Him as He is.

You believe, then, that He “was crucified, dead, and buried?” You believe this? You believe it with all your heart? Then remember what it involves. For you cannot believe this without in some measure feeling its grace and power upon your own soul. It was for you that He suffered all this, so that you might be reconciled to God, and enter at last upon eternal life.

"He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."—Matt. xxviii, 6.

VI.

“ The third day He rose from the dead.”

THIS is, indeed, a marvelous story. There is nothing to equal it in either history or romance. We have heard it and read it so frequently that it has lost some of its novelty and freshness, but when we pause at times to dwell upon the greatness of this miracle, and try to comprehend its meaning, we are fairly lost in awe and amazement. Try and imagine yourself a resident of Jerusalem some nineteen centuries ago. Take your stand with that great crowd that surges and yells outside the Hall of Judgment. You ask the meaning of the tumult and are told that a man, Jesus by name, a teacher of strange doctrines, and a reputed prophet, has been charged with both heresy and treason, and is now before Pilate, the Roman governor. Sentence of death is passed upon Him, and He is led to the place of execution. Between two thieves He is crucified at a place called Calvary, just a little distance from the city. After hanging upon the cross until death is accomplished, the body is removed to a stone sepulcher; this sepulcher is guarded by Roman soldiers, with the stone sealed by the Jewish authorities, and every possible precaution is taken against deception or removal. From the time of burial until the first day of the week everything is seemingly quiet and still, and the great city is persuaded that the Nazarene was only a deceiver who would fain have led away the people.

But on the morning of the third day there is great commotion. The soldiers who had guarded the tomb come into the city with marvelous tidings. They say that an angel descended from heaven while it was yet dawn, that he rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher. That his countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow, and that for fear of Him the keepers trembled and became as dead men. This story quickly spread. The people became strangely excited. Thousands flocked to the empty sepulcher; the chief priests took hasty counsel with the soldiers and bribed them to secrecy; while the disciples of Christ were jubilant, and openly declared that He had risen from the dead and appeared unto them.

Now, laying aside all prejudice and all preconception, is not this a most wonderful story? Remember it was no trance from which Christ arose. He was really and actually dead. Nor was He taken from the cross until the authorities were assured of this fact; and as though they would put this matter beyond any possibility of doubt, a soldier was commanded to thrust a spear into His side. And yet in the face of all this, before three days are accomplished, the story is published abroad that the Nazarene has risen from the grave; that He has appeared to his disciples; that He has been seen, not once, or twice, but many times; that He has walked and talked and even sat at meat with them, and has given every possible proof of His personality and identity.

We should not be surprised at men refusing to believe this story. Nothing but the most complete, the most irrefragable, the most perfectly sustained evi-

dence could make such a story credible. The statements of this chapter, in order to be believed, must have not merely the weight of evidence, but the proofs must be absolute and incontestable. If there is a shadow of a doubt or a suspicion resting upon the story of the resurrection, it loses all its value; and the Church, instead of building upon a solid rock, is only embedded in the sands of ignorance and superstition; for the Church stands or falls by the resurrection. This is the keystone in the arch of the Christian faith. Let this be removed, and but a mass of ruin remains. St. Paul frankly admits that, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain;" and going still further he declares, that "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." You see, then, how important this doctrine is; upon it hinge the character of Christ, the nature of the atonement, the integrity of the Scriptures, the stability of the Church, and the future of the soul. Hence it is well for us to see and examine the ground that we have for believing such a most vital and essential truth.

First. The Old Testament predicted that Christ would rise again. Your special attention is called to the fact that there are in the world to-day over five millions of Jews who trace their lineage back to Abraham, and to whom these Old Testament Scriptures are binding and conclusive as the law of God. These Jews are the instinctive enemies of all Christians. They regard the Christian Church as an abomination. They are expecting that in the fullness of time the Messiah will come and set up His kingdom on the earth; hence they keep guard over the

Old Testament oracles with a vigilance which is eternal. The story of the resurrection must therefore stand their merciless criticism, and any change or perversion of prophecy is simply impossible. God has had a great purpose in the preservation of this people. They stand as living witnesses to testify to the Old Testament records. The laws of Moses are written in their flesh and blood, and every synagogue in this or any other city is a link in a mighty chain of evidence which never can be broken. Just as when we stand before that monolith in Central Park, we are brought face to face with the great Egyptian empire, and in the presence of that graven stone the past is made strangely vivid, and the vast palaces of the Nile loom up in thought before us; so when we meet a Jew we are standing in the shadow of Abraham, of Moses, of Mount Sinai; and the very lines on his brow, the marks on his face, his distinctive character as a man, prove the abiding quality of those laws which were given in the wilderness. God has kept the Jews as sentinels for the Old Testament, and every Jew that walks our busy streets is an argument which reaches back nearly four thousand years, and in flesh and blood makes vivid the patriarchs and prophets of distant ages. The Christian teacher must not therefore change or in anywise pervert the ancient chronicles. Whatever statement is made or doctrine is declared must be in perfect harmony with the former dispensations. The past you see is securely guarded. The types and the symbols are preserved; every promise and prophecy is stereotyped, and any change in the records is utterly impossible. Now, what do the Old Testament Scriptures

say of Christ? Rather, what do they not say of Him? The Old Testament is but as a mountain chain from which flow all the streams of our Lord's Gospel, and the New Testament is but the great basin or sea into which the Old Testament pours itself; and the cross, in type and symbol, has been carried from the Garden of Eden to Mount Calvary, just as the ark of Noah was carried to Mount Ararat.

Take for illustration a single expression. We read in Corinthians, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." What does this mean? Is it simply a splendid piece of rhetoric used with thrilling effect by the apostle? By no means. The first fruits had reference to the offering which was made on the morrow after the passover Sabbath when the priest took the gathered sheaves and, after preparing them, waved them before the Lord, in the presence of the people, as a pledge and promise of the coming harvest. And, now, when did Christ rise from the dead? On the morrow after the passover Sabbath! Thus He became "the first fruits of them that slept," and the risen Lord is the glorious sign and pledge of that great harvest when all the dead will be raised. Other types and symbols might be given as further illustrations, but this one is sufficient, for they all express the same thought, and just as the finger post on the roadside points to the city, so every promise and prophecy points to the Messiah, the Christ of God, through whom we have life and immortality.

Second. Not only was the resurrection predicted of Christ, but He makes special mention of it Himself, and many times in His ministry He called direct

attention to the fact that not only must He suffer at the hands of His enemies, but the third day He would rise again. Upon this point He was very explicit. He gives it the utmost prominence in His teaching. He uses Jonah as a type of this truth, and His allusions to the temple at Jerusalem convey the same meaning. Now, the simple question for us to consider is, Did He rise again? Have we the most unanswerable proof? Have we evidence that cannot be controverted? Have we testimony that is clear, distinct, and convincing? Can the Christian Church demonstrate to the satisfaction of every honest, thoughtful mind that this story is really and positively true? Are we certain that this is not a fanciful legend, but a sublime, stupendous fact? The burden of proof rests upon the Church. We are not simply to believe, but we are to show grounds for believing; and it is our duty to prove the reality of this amazing miracle, and put beyond all question a truth that is so vital and important.

In order to accomplish the most in the shortest time, and also to be very simple and easily understood, let us ask and answer a few of the more important and prominent questions.

Have we reason to believe that Christ was really dead? Might not this have been a trance? Could there not have been a resuscitation of the body?

Such a thing is impossible. Under the Roman law the condemned must remain upon the cross until death is fully accomplished. In order to hasten death sometimes the limbs were broken, but in this case it was not deemed necessary. A spear, however, was thrust into the side of Christ, and from the wound

there issued water and blood, thus proving life to have been extinct.

Why was the body buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea? Why not in the place with the others who were crucified at the same time?

For three reasons: First, because it had been prophesied seven hundred years before that He would make "His grave with the wicked," alluding to His crucifixion between the two thieves, "and with the rich in His death," referring to the tomb which Joseph would give Him; second, Joseph had long been His secret disciple, and in the trial "had not consented to the counsel and deed of them," and now openly avows his faith and love for Him; and third, because if Christ had been buried in the ground set apart for the criminal dead the chief priests could not have set a watch or sealed the stone, thus making sure against all deception or imposture.

Who was appointed to guard this tomb? And could they have been bribed or withdrawn?

They were Roman soldiers detailed for special service among the Jews. Being idolaters, they had no sympathy with the disciples, and therefore could not be approached in that way; and being Romans, knowing that Christ had claimed to be a king, they had a special motive in guarding securely the place of His burial.

How long were they commanded to watch? And have we any reason to suppose that they went off duty before the time appointed?

They were commanded to keep watch until the third day, because this was the time claimed by Christ for His resurrection, and we are positive that the

guard was kept from the fact that the day after the crucifixion was the feast of the passover, when Jerusalem was crowded with strangers, many of whom had heard of Jesus, and would doubtless visit His tomb, hence the absence of the soldiers would at once be noticed ; and also because the military code of the Roman government was exceedingly strict, and desertion from duty was an offense punishable with death.

Was every possible precaution taken to preserve this tomb against invasion, so that the body could not be removed ?

It was guarded by part of a Roman legion ; it was sealed under the seal of the high priest, and any attempt to remove the stone would have been discovered instantly and the offenders punished. Then this was a new tomb. No one had ever lain in it before ; it was the tomb of a rich man, and must necessarily have occupied a prominent place, and both the Jewish and Roman authorities united in their efforts to guard it securely.

Might not the strange visitation of which the soldiers spoke been a plot arranged by the disciples to frighten the keepers from the grave, and while they go into the city the disciples enter and empty the grave ?

This could not be ; only a part of the guard departed from the sepulcher, their time for relief having come, and others at once took their places. And then how could a little handful of disciples accomplish an earthquake or create such a visitation as would frighten men so thoroughly hardened and trained as the Roman soldiers of that day ?

Is there any possible truth in the story that the chief

priests put into the mouths of these soldiers about the disciples coming and stealing the body away?

Everything about this is manifestly untrue. Nay, more; it is a most clumsily constructed lie. To sleep on guard was a crime with a death penalty. For the whole guard to sleep at once was a great improbability. For a few disciples to remove a huge stone without disturbing the keepers was utterly impossible; and even if the guards were asleep, how did they know anything about the disciples? The fact that nothing was ever done to these soldiers by way of punishment is in itself ample proof that their story obtained no credence whatever.

Was the body of Christ ever found? Never. And this is most significant. For if the tomb had been entered and the body removed, to have disposed of it would have been a task of extraordinary difficulty. For not only was the city crowded, but tents and booths occupied almost every space for miles around, and in the bright light of the paschal moon, which then was in the full, to carry away a dead body without being observed was simply impossible.

Friends, all this ground has been most carefully gone over before. Older, wiser, more experienced, and careful thinkers than we can ever hope to be, have gathered up this evidence, link by link, until the chain has been made complete. And yet it is well to bring some things to our remembrance. For in these days the spirit of the questioner is abroad. The holiest and divinest things are examined with a care and a scrutiny beyond that of any other age, and doubts are freely expressed concerning doctrines that once met with ready acceptance. Hence it is well to be rooted and grounded

in our most holy faith, and be ready always to give a reason of the hope that is within us.

Allow, then, two more questions :

Have we any evidence outside the Scriptures relative to this matter ?

Josephus, one of the most learned of the Jews, and a total unbeliever in Christianity, as we understand it, writes in these words : "And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned Him to the cross, those that loved Him at the first did not forsake Him, for He appeared to them alive again the third day as the divine prophets had foretold." Pilate also wrote to the Roman Senate, giving a full account of Christ and His resurrection, and asked that He be placed in the list of Roman deities, and in the early days of the Christian faith a magnificent building was erected by disciples, and heathen as well, to commemorate this august event. That a man who was crucified under Pontius Pilate after three days rose from the dead is the most thoroughly attested fact in all history. But, now, was this man Christ ? Can we identify the Hero of the resurrection with the crucified One of Calvary ? Who are the witnesses, and are they numerous enough to preclude all possibility of mistake ?

See that woman yonder in the garden. She is weeping bitterly. Looking into the empty grave she thinks lovingly of Him who had redeemed her from the power of the evil spirits, and she wonders where the poor body has been buried. A shadow comes between her and the light, and perhaps without looking up she answers the question, "Why weepest thou ?" by saying, "They have taken away my Lord, and I

know not where they have laid Him." And then the single word "Mary!" falls upon her ear, and with a joyful "Rabboni!" she is worshipping at His feet. Could she have been mistaken?

See yon fishermen out upon the lake. They hear a voice saying, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." They obey, and at once inclose a great haul of fishes, when Peter, with characteristic fervor, leaps into the water, saying, "It is the Lord?" and swims to shore and worships Him. Could he have been mistaken? Following Christ as he did for three years, is it likely that a stranger could impose upon his credulity and deceive him?

See the disciples gathered in their accustomed meeting place. Hear Thomas saying, "I will not believe except I see the print of the nails in his hands and thrust my hand into his side." Then listen, "Thomas, reach hither thy finger and behold my hands." And then hear "My Lord and my God!" Could he have been mistaken?

See the little company again as they are about to witness the ascension of Christ, and one asks, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" when Jesus turns and looks upon John, the beloved disciple, the writer of the fourth gospel. Could John have been mistaken?

See Paul going down to Damascus when he is arrested by a light above the brightness of the sun, and a voice peals from the sky, "I am Jesus." Could Paul have been mistaken? Not only was He seen of the twelve, but of over five hundred at once, and the evidence is so complete that doubt or question is honestly impossible. Nothing has been left to chance or

accident. Every point has been divinely guarded. God knew the weakness and perversity of the human heart, and so He took care that nothing be lacking to complete the triumph of this first Easter Day. And then the absence of any motive to make a false statement must impress everyone. Men have been known to forswear themselves when some strong motive has actuated them, such as a heavy bribe or an interest in some possession. But, now, what possible motive could these disciples have had? They had nothing to gain, but everything to lose. Their goods were confiscated, their families were alienated, they were driven into exile. They were beaten with stripes, they were cast into prison, they were hunted across the hills. They burrowed in caves and dens of the earth, they suffered all manner of persecution, they were cast to the hungry lions in the amphitheater. They were wrapped in coatings of tar and burned like candles in the Roman squares. They were crucified, they were beheaded, they were broken on the wheel, they were sawn asunder, they were flung out to starve like dogs in the streets, and yet amid all these agonies of body and soul they remained unshaken in their faith, and to the very last testified that Christ had risen from the dead, that they had seen Him, and with this faith in their hearts and on their lips they died in glorious triumph. Now, what could have been their motive other than to tell the absolute truth? And had there been any deception or imposture would not some of them have confessed? There was large reward for such. But there was no confession, no recantation, no compromise, no hesitation. Men and women were equally conspicu-

ous for their loyalty and heroism. As one column was broken another was formed ; as one martyr was offered another was ready to fill the place , and thus through fire and blood and prisons and death this story came, growing stronger with each year, till at length the shouts of the triumphant Christians overpowered the sound of the imperial trumpet, and the tramp of the great army of the believers was mightier than the mailed legions whose tread at one time shook the earth !

Still further, this was the theme of the apostolic ministry, when, if it was not true, it could be most readily denied. We think, sometimes, that the apostles preached mainly the doctrine of the cross. This is only partly true. They preached the cross, but the cross as the background to the empty grave. See Peter on Pentecost. He speaks of Him whom they had taken unjustly and slew upon the accursed tree, and then declares that " this Jesus hath God raised up whereof we all are witnesses." The same with Paul on Mars Hill. The same with the disciples everywhere. The resurrection was their principal theme ; every other truth revolved around this just as the planets around the sun. Christ and the resurrection was their battle cry. With this shout upon their lips they rushed into the heat of conflict, and the Christian Church to-day rests not upon a cross but upon an empty grave, and the stone rolled away from the mouth of the sepulcher is the chief corner stone in the Church of the living God.

"By what title do you demand your liberties?" cried the haughty King John to the sturdy barons at Runnymede. "By these !" and a host of glittering

swords waved in the sun. By what title do we claim eternal life? and the faith of the world answers back, "The empty grave!" And so here we come to view the place where our Lord lay, to look for a moment into the grave where He slept for a few peaceful hours, and then to lift our thought to the eternal heavens, whither He has gone, to be our King and Priest before God. "He is not here." No marble tomb contains His dust. We can bury Napoleons and Alexanders, but He cannot be buried. He lives in His Church, in His Gospel, in His people, in the heavens of glory, and He ever liveth to make intercession for his own!

“ Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”—
Acts i, 11.

VII.

“He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.”

THAT man would have a most daring imagination, and also unbounded confidence in human credulity, who could write such a chapter as the one in which our text is found, and then present it to the world for acceptance and belief. Here is a man surrounded by His disciples, holding with them the most dear and familiar intercourse, and yet only a few weeks before that man had been crucified on a Roman cross, a soldier's spear thrust through His side, His body laid in a stone sepulcher! And now that same man, attended by the same disciples who had seen Him die, is walking along the same road upon which He had journeyed on the week of His passion and death! Where is there in all history any story that will compare with this?

Then, again, after this man had given final instructions to His disciples, telling them what they were to do, where they were to wait, of the work they were to accomplish, raising His hands He blessed them, and while in the very act of blessing He rose bodily from their midst, and with hands extended in loving farewell He passed beyond the range of human sight and was lost in the circling clouds.

And still again, as they stand there with wondering face and wistful eye looking at the mysterious cloud, they are startled by the presence of two men

in white apparel, who say to them, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go." And then, as a fitting close to this wondrous story, these disciples who had been so suddenly bereft, who had just seen their Lord and Master pass away, and who from henceforth must live without the inspiration of His presence; these men upon whom was laid the command of world-wide evangelism, and whose life must needs be one of pitiless persecution, instead of being broken hearted and desolate, they return to Jerusalem with great joy, and are continually in the temple praising and blessing God!

And yet this story is written in such a simple, artless way that its truthfulness can hardly be questioned. Our instincts, our intuitions, our subtle mysterious sympathies, that part of our nature which seldom if ever, leads us astray, accepts this whole story as unquestionably as a child its mother's kiss, or the flowers the morning sun.

It is with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness, and it is the heart which receives and believes this story in all its grandeur and fullness.

At the first thought it seems strange that Christ should have left His disciples at this time, for they surely needed Him, and the inspiration of His presence. A great work had been given them, and without Him how could that work be accomplished? They were to go out and teach all nations; they were to establish churches; they were to preach the Gospel of the kingdom; they were to so formulate and present this new faith as to make it definite and accept-

able; what they had learned in their three years of discipleship was to be shaped into teaching and doctrine so that it would mold the life and character of the believer. Theirs was indeed a herculean task. And when we think of this little band, without wealth, without learning, without any of the means most likely to insure success, we feel as though Christ should have remained, and by His presence and direction enable them to discharge the duties with which they were intrusted. His departure left them without a leader. Peter, who had been prominent during the ministry of our Lord, and from whom much might have been expected, had fallen into grievous sin, and anything like strong leadership on his part was impossible. Thomas lacked the faith, and consequently the enthusiasm, for such a position as this; James and John, though admitted to the inner circle of discipleship, failed to show any qualities of responsibility and command. The prediction of Christ that they would be as "sheep without a shepherd" was literally fulfilled. Nothing like this had ever happened before. When Moses was called to Mount Nebo, there to be kissed into eternal life by the lips of infinite Love, Joshua was ready to assume the command. When Elijah departed in the chariot of fire Elisha was waiting to receive the falling mantle; but when Christ ascended there was no one who could even attempt to fill His place, or carry on the work which He had left behind.

And then, if we pause to think of all that confronted these disciples, our wonder only increases. The Jews had taken their Lord and crucified Him, and repudiated utterly the story of the resurrection.

By the Romans Christ was regarded as guilty of treason, and His disciples would be watched with the utmost rigor and suspicion. And now with Christ gone, His body supposed to be hidden away, opposed by both Jews and Romans, how could these men face the tremendous odds which were arrayed against them. From our standpoint it would surely seem as if Christ should have remained here ; and yet, instead of remaining, He departs. Why did He ascend into heaven, when it would appear as though He should have tarried on the earth ?

First. He nceded to go so that the Comforter might come. Upon this point there can be no dispute. The words of Christ are so explicit that no room is left for either doubt or supposition. And we must never forget that the advent of the Holy Ghost is the crown and climax of the whole scheme of salvation. This was God's objective point from the very beginning. This was the result for which everything was intended. For thousands of years God had been laboring to accomplish this purpose. It was a long, slow, toilsome process. We often wonder that God did not grow weary, but He kept on. Through type, and symbol, and altar, and sacrifice, God gradually led the thought of the world until when Christ came the idea of a heaven-sent Redeemer occupied in large degree the minds of men. But though Christ's coming in the flesh, and His suffering on the cross will ever stand out as the most mysterious and stupendous fact in the history of the universe, yet the incarnation is not, after all, the culminating point in the love of God to men.

But a few years ago, speaking comparatively, the

world was astonished at the boldness of the engineer Lesseps, who proposed to cut through the Isthmus of Suez, and thus connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, and open up a new highway to the Orient. At first the scheme was pronounced visionary, Utopian, a wild dream; but science, when properly understood, can easily bring to pass the impossible, and in due time noble ships sailed at ease through that mighty canal, passing from one sea to another in peace and safety. Now this represents somewhat the wondrous plan of God in the redemption of the world, and the cross is simply the aqueduct which opens the infinite sea of God's grace and love, and makes possible the flooding of the human soul with divine light and wisdom. God's plan contemplated not merely the saving of the human race as poor wretches, drowning in the remorseless sea, and dragged ashore more dead than alive, but the raising of that race into such conditions so that the divine Spirit would dwell in the human heart, as the shekinah used to dwell in the temple, until every man would be the temple of the Holy Ghost, and we would all become priests and kings unto God. There is something thrillingly magnificent in the redemptive purposes of God, and these purposes are very imperfectly understood if we imagine that God's idea of salvation is as the deliverance of prisoners from the house of bondage, or the escape of hapless beings from some wreck. God's plan actually goes so far, as not only to deliver man from the power and thralldom of sin, to remove every shackle of habit and desire, and lead him into the largest and fullest liberty; but to put His Spirit within him, so that he will walk in the light of that

Spirit, be controlled by Him, guided by Him, inspired by Him, and that in the heart of the individual man there will be an actual realization of the kingdom of God.

But to bring all this to pass it was essential that Christ should depart, for the Spirit who was to come could not be localized or restrained within one human body, but must have infinite freedom in which to bring His boundless energies into play. And as long as Christ remained in the flesh these disciples would have simply followed Him, going where He went, tarrying where He tarried, listening to His word, and waiting upon His ministry, hence the very thing that He came to do would have remained undone; for He came not only to bring God to man, but man to God, to lift him up, to refine him, to purify him, to spiritualize him, to raise him so that he would be able to "sit in heavenly places" and have communion with the eternal and the unseen. Christ in the body meant the withholding of the largest and most supreme of the divine gifts; hence, He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away."

Second. He needed to go that He might prepare a place for His disciples. Upon this point there can be no dispute either. We have Christ's own word for it, a word that was spoken in direct explanation of His departure. And as we meditate on this expression of our Lord it seems to flash like a diamond in the light, and with each turn and change sends out gleams of new and wondrous meaning. Here we have the distinct intimation that heaven is a place as well as a state. The idea of a heaven underlies all revelation. Just as the paper lies under the type and

gives the sense and meaning of every character, so heaven lies back of all Scripture revealing everywhere the design and purpose of God. And from the Book of Genesis to the visions of St. John the thought of heaven clearly extends, brightening in beauty, growing in grandeur, developing in power, until, in the Apocalypse, it bursts forth with a glory so awful and mysterious that, like the eye gazing at the noonday sun, we are blinded at the sight. But so constituted are we that, instead of deriving any strength or consolation from this, we have contrived in almost every imaginable way to make heaven so indistinct and remote that the thought of it affords little, if any, pleasure. We have come to regard it only as a state of exalted experience, a condition of spiritual being, a degree of religious attainment, and we seldom think of it as a place of actual life. We have lost sight of all idea of location, and have taught ourselves to believe that it may be anywhere or everywhere, and so fail to see heaven in anything that is tangible or real. Such thinking as this has made the other life very shadowy. Everything about it has an air of unreality. We have no definite or positive beliefs, and the poor Indian who talks about the Great Spirit and the happy hunting ground has clearer and sharper conceptions of the other life than many of us.

But over against all this we have the positive statement of our blessed Lord. True He does not tell us where it is ; He does not name any particular star, or group of stars ; it may not be anywhere in sight ; God's universe lies far beyond the reach of mortal eye ; there are systems hidden behind these which are revealed ; but Christ tells us it is somewhere, it has a

location, it is a place, and He is now in it, and one of the reasons why He is not here is because He is there, fitting and preparing it for His disciples. And this leads us to observe that preparing this place must be a work of transcendent importance, when it requires the personal presence and active superintendence of our Lord Himself. How much is involved here who can say? Does it mean that the introduction of the human race into the glories and mysteries of the unseen world is an event of such significance as to demand the actual presence and supervision of Christ the Lord? Does it mean that the redemption of this world, involving as it did the incarnation and crucifixion of the Messiah, was of such vast and infinite moment that every redeemed soul shall be received with the highest celestial honors? Does it mean that this new race, each of whom shall bear "the marks of the Lord Jesus," are to have a special place in the heavens of the eternal God, a place specially prepared at the hand of their Lord and Master? Does it mean that to come up out of great tribulation, to keep one's self unspotted from the world, to live a righteous and a godly life, is of such value in the sight of heaven, that those who do this are welcomed with demonstrations to which our pageants are not even as a dewdrop to the sea? If it means any of these things, and we think it does, then what magnificent possibilities stretch before every Christian life! A heaven prepared by Christ, a heaven occupied by Christ, a heaven where we are received by Christ, and though "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." And so He

said, "I go to prepare a place for you, . . . that where I am, there ye may be also."

3. He needed to go that He might carry on His work of intercession. Nor need there be any discussion upon this point. He said Himself, "I will pray the Father," and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews boldly declares that we have a "great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," who is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." And now mark the language of these two men in the white apparel, "This same Jesus which is taken from you into heaven." It was no dim, shadowy outline that ascended from their midst. It was Christ in His actual personality, with the body which bore the marks of the spear and the nails, the body which Thomas was asked to feel and examine, the body with which He had met the disciples in the gray of the early dawn on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias. It was no specter, no apparition, no ghostly form without flesh or substance that for a moment or two poised in the air and then disappeared from view; but it was He, Himself, their veritable Friend, Redeemer, Lord, with whom they had often held the closest companionship, whom they had seen die upon the cross, and whose living words were now vibrating upon their ear and heart.

There is a tendency in many minds to think of Christ's incarnation and humanity as something transitory. Some believe that He came to this world for a special purpose, and when that purpose was accomplished He departed, leaving behind the body

of his flesh, and entered upon that other life which is purely spiritual. We are told that He came to bring heaven down to earth, and in the transcendent beauty of His life, in the grace and mercy of His Gospel, in the bestowal of the Spirit, He brought the divine and the eternal within the reach of the world ; but if He brought heaven down to earth, why not bring earth up to heaven, and in His own body show to the wondering angels how complete had been His triumph, how mysterious had been His sufferings ? Which flag arouses the greater enthusiasm ? Is it the one fresh and pure from the hands of its maker, glistening in the sun, perfect in form and design ; or the other, black with smoke, riddled with shot, cut and torn until but a few tatters remain ? Which regiment fills the air with acclamations ? Is it the one marching with unbroken ranks, keeping step like a machine, every face bright and youthful ; or the veterans with scarred faces, with bandaged limbs, with faded uniform, and with ranks fearfully broken ? What a reception England gave to the heroes of the Crimea ! What a reception Germany gave to the heroes of Sedan ! What a reception New York gave to the heroes returning from the South ! But what, think you, must heaven have done when the Son of Man entered within its gates, and with the body which had hung upon the cross, which had lain within a tomb, which had met and conquered death, which had brought salvation and deliverance to a lost world, which had led captivity captive and become the first fruits of them that slept, with that same body, only glorified and made after the power of an endless life, pass up through the ranks of the shining throng and

sit down at "the right hand of the Majesty on high!"

And there as a man He pleads for man. He is there as a priest who was tempted on all points like as we are. "A man has become our hiding place."

And then, too, Christ in the body gives a reality and vividness to the other life which are not possible in any other way. We can think of Him as an actual being. We can imagine something of His form and appearance, and by so doing we can have more directness and definiteness in our spiritual life. For, constituted as we are, we cannot comprehend the purely spiritual. We must have a frame upon which to stretch the canvas of our thought. We must have a base for the ladder of our hope. We must have a trellis for the vines of the heart. We cannot, in this life at any rate, do without something actual and tangible. Our thought is so weak and uncertain that we dare not trust it by itself. And it is here where the ascended body of our Lord so powerfully helps us. We may not be able to pierce the veil that hangs between matter and spirit, nor comprehend any of the mysteries of the spiritual realm; but we are able to keep "looking unto Jesus," and through Him, "by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say His flesh," we are enabled to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." And so He said, "I go unto my Father, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

“For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.”—Luke ix, 26.

VIII.

“From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”

WHEN you hear a man say that he has no use for creeds, and that all he cares for is the simple Gospel, you can instantly reach one of two conclusions respecting that man—either that he has attained to a thorough knowledge of the meaning and spirit of the Gospel, or that he is utterly ignorant of its character and purpose. In the one case he is like a ship which has been towed out from the harbor and has entered upon the great sea, where the winds have mighty sweep, and so no longer is dependent upon the tugboat, for it can set its own sails and make its own way across the ocean; in the other case he is like a ship laid up in the dock, fastened to the shore, unable of itself to make its way out to the sea, and yet refusing any help or assistance that may be proffered. In the one we see courage, in the other cowardice, and while the one is spreading the broad sails and cleaving a passage through the trackless deep, the other is wasting itself away; a mere hulk of no use or profit whatever.

It is undoubtedly true that just as the sapling, by striking its roots deep into the earth, gradually acquires a strength which makes it independent of protection and fence work, and is able to live its own brave and mighty life, so it is possible for a man to get beyond the limits of a mere formal expression of his faith;

but that is a condition which requires years of study and meditation and prayer.

A creed, when properly understood, is only as a river-bed into which the thoughts, desires, hopes, and aspirations of the soul, like so many streams and springs and tributaries, pour themselves, and thus are enabled to reach the boundless sea. And such a creed as the one known as the Apostles' Creed has this advantage over all others formulated by the Church, namely, not only are all of its articles in harmony with the Scriptures, but in nearly every instance the very language of Scripture is employed to set forth each article. For anyone, therefore, to say that he has no use for creeds, such an objection, if made against the Apostles' Creed, would mean that he has no use for the Bible.

In our recitation of this creed it is more than probable that most of us have not given very serious or earnest attention to the article which we are now considering. "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead," and yet if any one article could be more solemn or impressive than another it surely is the one which has just been quoted. Such an article as this should make us pause, and not only pause, but think, and think earnestly, soberly, and ask ourselves what this really means. If this article is to be understood literally, and if we are to take from it not only what it implies, but what it seems to state most emphatically and distinctly, then any light or careless dismissal of this theme would be unworthy of rational beings. It is indeed sadly true that we have reached that stage in intellectual and religious life when we treat the most sacred themes with

indifference and flippancy, and when we discuss the problems of life and destiny from the standpoint of a so-called liberalism. But the question suggested by this article is too solemn and too personal to be disposed of in this way. If Christ is coming again, and if He is coming to judge this world, and if not only the living but the dead are to appear before Him, it is of tremendous importance that we know it, and there is nothing else in life that is of such importance as a clear, definite understanding of this matter. People may say that you are narrow, illiberal, of the old school; but no matter what people say, the only question is, Is this true? Is Christ coming again to this world? and if He is, we should give ourselves no peace until we were prepared for His coming. God forbid that anyone should ever charge us with bigotry, with a denominational intolerance, with a lack of generosity and catholicity; but there are times when sentiment must not be mistaken for sentimentalism, and when the courtesies and amenities of life must not be misunderstood. If a sea captain knows that his vessel is in imminent peril, and at any moment may founder, he has no right to say to the passengers that there is no danger. The wiser and more humane course for him would be to have the boats unswung from the davits, and the passengers prepared for the dread emergency. If the physician knows that your child is struggling with some foul and, possibly, fatal disease, he is guilty of a crime if you are unwarned, for it may be that other lives are unduly exposed. There are times when the truth must be told. The case is too momentous, the results are too solemn, the issues are too vast, for anything but the serious, sober truth; and the man

who will not tell the truth at such times deserves to be branded as a coward and a traitor. Upon matters which are of minor importance, we can afford to give and receive the largest liberty; but when it comes to the discussion of a theme that concerns the salvation and destiny of a human soul, the question is not one of liberty, but one of truth, and to evade it, or avoid it, or misstate it, is a crime against both God and man.

Is there to be a second advent? Is Christ coming again in person to this earth? Will this world look upon Him whom it crucified, who was dead and buried, and who on the third day rose from the dead? Will the eyes of men see the man of Galilee who wore the crown of thorns and the purple robe, and whose side was thrust through with a spear? To these questions, if the Bible is true, there is but one answer. Scores and scores of times in both the Old and New Testaments have we the most solemn and impressive statements with regard to His second coming, and the prophecies and predictions that relate to this second advent are far more numerous than those that apply to His first appearing. And so, if there has been one advent, there shall most certainly be another. For the first is only the prophecy of the second, and either one without the other would fail to realize its divine purpose.

"From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." "From thence." To understand this we need to go with the disciples on that eventful day some weeks after the resurrection, and as they communed with Jesus, and while He was blessing them, all at once He was enveloped in a cloud and disappeared in the heavens. And as with them our faith

follows Him in that glorious ascension ; we can easily understand the meaning of that wondrous psalm, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in." What a reception Christ received as he entered the eternal paradise ! What a hush must have fallen upon the great hosts as they looked upon Him who for love of sinful and disobedient man had put aside the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and had made Himself of no reputation, and who had "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." They saw the body of His humiliation, the marks of the nails in the hands, the thrust of the spear in the side, the brow upon which the crown of thorns had been placed, and as they gazed with intense wonder upon these tokens of His infinite condescension and love, surely the voice of the mighty host of God was silent, and the sound of the harpers ceased, and as He passed on amid the shining multitude until He reached the throne of His eternal glory, it is easy for us to know what St. John meant when he said, "And behold there was silence in heaven." But when at length the rapture and worship and adoration could no longer be restrained we hear the wondrous chorus, "Glory and honor and majesty and dominion be unto our God forever and forever."

Have we time to pause here for just a moment, and think of what this enthroned and victorious Saviour means for us ? That sublime scene in heaven, of which we have just the merest hint in the Scriptures, has a depth of meaning, a richness of significance almost infinite in its compass and impressive-

ness. For it means not merely the amazing love of God, the pity, the mercy, the condescension of Christ, but it means the enthronement of humanity ; it means that the divine incarnation has not only brought God down to man, but raised man up to God, so that now in heaven the man Christ Jesus stands as the type and representative of our race. This humanity which had been tempted, which had fallen, which had been degraded by centuries of sin until it would seem as though it had no place in the economy of God, through the indwelling of the divine Son, has been transformed, redeemed, glorified, and now is enthroned in the eternal paradise as the pledge and promise of a regenerated world. The most celebrated diadem among the kingdoms of the earth is that which is known as the Iron Crown of the Lombards. For over twelve hundred years this emblem of monarchy has been more highly esteemed than any other, no matter how costly or magnificent it may be. Charlemagne, away back in the eighth century, and Napoleon ten centuries later, were not content until this circlet had been placed upon their brows, thus making the coronation complete. What is it that makes this crown so famous and so much to be desired as a pledge of sovereignty? Not the workmanship, for that is very simple ; not the gold or the precious stones, for the gold is of trifling value, being but a band of plates of ribbonlike thickness, while the gems are not of special worth. But inside the golden circle runs a thin rim of iron, and this iron is supposed to have been one of the nails that pierced the feet of Christ when He hung upon the cross. Just think of it. A nail from His cross, the most coveted and desired

emblem of monarchy that exists in this world! And if we think so highly of His humanity, how much more the angels of God! And yet that humanity is our humanity, and in Him we have our pledge, our hope, our promise, our salvation.

“From thence He shall come.” Regarding this coming the Scriptures are most emphatic, taking care always to state explicitly that “He shall come.” “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: . . . and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” These are the words of Job, and were spoken in all probability long before even Moses was born. Just as the Mississippi and the Missouri—one rising away up in Minnesota, and the other in the Rocky Mountains—pour themselves into each other and unitedly flow into the Mexican Gulf, so do the first and second advents of Christ run through all revelation, until finally the one is lost in the other, and the ocean of God’s infinite and eternal purpose is finally attained. And if we believe in the one we must also believe in the other. If we accept the story of the singing angels, the adoring shepherds, the worship of the wise men, and all of the other wonders and marvels that gather around the scene in Bethlehem, in like manner must we accept the story of His second coming, when He shall come in His own glory, and in the glory of His Father, and in the glory of the holy angels. Nor can we but notice how earnestly each of the sacred writers uses every figure and form of language in order to set forth the grandeur and splendor of this august event. Everything that is stately

in expression, whether it be the rolling clouds, the mighty thunders, the procession of the angels, the sound of trumpets, is taken up one after the other, and the magnificence and solemnity which are to accompany the second advent are plainly seen all through the Scriptures. Undoubtedly this language is figurative, but in the figure we have the idea, and that is a spectacle more dazzling and wonderful than the universe has yet seen. And why not? He came once as a Babe. He slept in a manger. He worked for His bread. He wore the robe of the Nazarene. He wandered a stranger and an outcast among the hills of Galilee. He was despised and rejected of men. He was persecuted, betrayed, reviled, scourged, spat upon, crucified. The very garments that He wore on Calvary were taken by the soldiers. He was laid to rest in a borrowed grave. Even His resurrection was denied, and the disciples who insisted that He had risen from the dead were put to death. There was nothing by way of shame, reproach, contempt, ignominy, hatred, scorn, revilings, that this world did not put upon Him, and yet all the while He had nothing but kindness and goodness and mercy for everyone who came to Him. Anything more inhuman or ungrateful is not within the compass of the imagination. The more one reads the story of the gospels, the more incredible it seems; and when we look down the history of the ages, and see what has taken place during the last nineteen centuries, it is almost impossible to believe that these things are true. But they are true, awfully true, fearfully true, and even to-day do we not see the same bitter hostility that there has ever been? We are prone some-

times to speak of what the world would do now if Christ came. But what would the world do? The world, remember, not the Church. It would do just as was done before. There is no difference in men whether they live in Jerusalem or New York, whether they live in this century or two thousand years ago. The natural heart is enmity against God. Think of the tens of thousands who in this nominally Christian city never darken a church door, who never open the sacred Scriptures, who never breathe a holy prayer, who openly profane the Sabbath, who pollute the air with their ribaldry and blasphemy! Think of the conditions of vice and drunkenness and poverty and degradation which exist within sound of our church bells. Think of the greed, the avarice, the strife, the elements of anarchy and evil, which are all about us. In point of fact, this city would treat Christ no better than the Jews treated Him. And yet His Gospel has been in the world for all these centuries. We can understand therefore the awful scene on Calvary, and we can realize even from ourselves the shame and horror of His passion and death.

And so the contrast between these two advents will be almost infinite. Wealth, grandeur, power, majesty, splendor, magnificence, will attest His kingliness and divinity, and the glory of His second coming will be the most sublime and wondrous event in the history of the eternities.

“He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” Beforetime He came as a Redeemer; now He will come as a Judge. Beforetime He came with calls of mercy and pardon; now He will come, and all men must stand at the bar of His judgment. And from

this judgment no one can escape. The living at His coming and the dead who are in the graves alike shall be judged of Him. How solemn such a thought as this should make us! What deep and earnest searching of heart there should be when we think of this! It will not do to say that all this belongs to the age of superstition, for millions of people in all parts of the world this very day have said that they believe "He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Nor can you read the Bible without seeing this on almost every page. Begin as far back as you will, read through the very earliest books in the Old Testament, as well as the last ones of the New, and you will find this truth declared in the most solemn and emphatic terms. We ought to think carefully about these things. They need not make us sad, nor fill our hearts with despair. They should rather inspire us and help us; for, if we are trying to do His will, His coming means for us divine recognition and eternal reward. For if He loved us so that He died for us, and is now our high priest at the throne of infinite justice, we may be confident that having loved His own He will love them unto the end. And it is a comfort to think that justice will yet be administered in this world. As things now are, how little real justice there is! The mistakes, the misconceptions, the escape of the guilty, the punishment of the innocent, the deceptions, the hypocrisies, the weary waiting, the failures, the heartsickness—O so much there is that we cannot possibly understand. The apostle, indeed, was right when he said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." He looked forward, therefore, to a time when

his life would be understood, when his motives would be cleared, and when his character would abide the test of our Lord's coming. And this is the way to think of it; for He will right the wrong, He will clear the innocent, He will vindicate His disciples, and from His lips there will fall the gracious words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Then let us look for His coming. Let us live under the comfort and inspiration which such a coming should mean to us; and let us rejoice that every day brings Him nearer and yet nearer to us.

“He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism.”—Acts xix, 2, 3.

IX.

“I believe in the Holy Ghost.”

IN mountainous countries it is no uncommon thing for a stream to lose itself under some mighty rock, and disappear as completely from sight as though it had gone forever out of existence. There is neither trace nor sign of its presence anywhere, except the faint murmur of the falling waters as they pass away in the mystery and darkness. The trees lift themselves proudly in the air ; the birds swoop and circle through the sky ; the wild flowers bloom in the quivering sunlight ; the winds blow down the mountain side, and the clouds move gently along the sky ; but, look where you will, you cannot find the little river which, up yonder in the hills, gave such promise of life and strength.

But as you travel on and reach the summit of a huge boulder there opens before you a rich and fertile valley, and there, like a golden ribbon gleaming in the sun, is the stream which had disappeared so strangely. But how strong and mighty and affluent it has become ! This is no rivulet or mountain brook, but a noble river sending out its grateful life through all that region ; a giant artery pulsing with a strength that makes the wheels of industry revolve, and bearing to the distant sea the commerce of a nation. And yet there is no real mystery after all ; for that little stream, in the depths of its hidden life, was augmented by tiny rills and myriad oozings until it gath-

ered up a force which could not be restrained, and, bursting from the bowels of the earth, it swept on with an energy exhaustless and immeasurable.

Now, what is this but an illustration of the circumstances surrounding our text? Away in yon fortress, on the borders of the Dead Sea, the life of John the Baptist goes out in a darkness which no human eye can pierce, and one of the bravest, grandest men that the world has ever known disappears from mortal sight. But now, twenty years and more after that night of revelry, when Herod made his shameful vow, and when John fell a victim to a woman's hate and a man's weakness, in far distant Ephesus the results of John's ministry manifest themselves, and form the foundation of one of the greatest churches in all Asia Minor.

O, when will we be able to understand that the influence of a man's life far outreaches the length of the life itself? A life, no matter how long it is, is only a question of years, but influence travels into the eternities. Herod could take away the life of John, and the disciples could bury the body of John, but the influence of John could not be taken away nor buried; and when Paul was ready to begin his work in the city of Diana's temple, the very heart of Ephesian idolatry, that influence was there revealing itself in the lives and characters of the disciples who were waiting to receive him.

In answer to the question of St. Paul these men say that they had received the baptism of John, and under the vows of that baptism they had been living all these years. They could easily recall that eventful visit to Jerusalem when they found the city most

wonderfully excited, and, following the multitudes who pursued their way to the Jordan, they saw and heard the prophet of the wilderness. With a voice which had learned to cope with the storms of the desert until it had the strength and the clearness of a trumpet he cried, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and so startling and yet so convincing were the words of the Baptist, that crowds responded to his appeals and eagerly embraced his discipleship. The self-satisfied Pharisees, the haughty Sadducees, the brutal soldiers, the rapacious publicans, were moved by the same impulse as the others, and sought baptism at the hands of this prophet of the desert.

But though he baptized, yet his one cry was, "Repent, repent, repent;" and the echoes of that cry reverberated all through the valley of the Jordan. And it would seem as if repentance was the beginning of discipleship, and when there is not genuine repentance for sin the life of God has not opened in the soul. In these days we hear almost nothing of repentance. So eager are we to report statistics of revivals and to add to the lists of church membership that we keep repentance in the background, and urge men and women to give but the least sign of their desire for discipleship; and when they do so, we rejoice as though the kingdom of God was fully set up in their hearts. And yet for years they have trampled God's law under their feet, they have profaned His holy day, they have violated His will, they have mocked Him to His face, they have lived in open sin and rebellion, they have been heartless and careless and selfish, they have been unfair in their dealings

with their fellow-men, they have brought shame and reproach upon their homes and families, they have wasted their substance in riotous living, they have given themselves over to all manner of indulgence, in every sinful way that can be imagined they have followed the desires and devices of their own hearts, and now, without a sign of penitence or expression of sorrow, they are taken into the fold and classed with God's dear children. O, what a mockery it all is! What a travesty upon religion! Is it any wonder that church membership is held so lightly, and that many people think no more of the vows and obligations they take upon them than if they had no meaning or value whatever? All that is wanted now is some sensational evangelist, a new hymn book with catchy tunes and sentimental poetry, a great excitement that will crowd the church for the time, and then a report that will fill one or two columns of the newspapers; and under such means as these the modern church is content to do its work. God forbid that any word of mine should be so construed as to reflect in anywise upon a gracious and heaven-sent revival; for I believe in revivals with all my heart, and when God pours out His Spirit upon the church in which I labor my soul rejoices with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory; but when we see the whole plan of the Gospel deliberately set aside, and when we see church membership so shamefully dishonored, and when we see men and women taking rank as disciples who have not learned the first principles of genuine religion, it is impossible, at times, not to feel that we crucify "the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."

But you have not been immoral ; you have not been guilty of any breach of honor or decency ; you have lived without blame or reproach, and can hold up your head in the community—what then ? Christ answers that question ; for it was to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, a man whose outward life was as spotless as that of anyone here, to whom He put the divine condition of discipleship by saying, “Except a man be born from above, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” My friends, without deep, genuine repentance the rebel only changes his uniform ; at heart he is the same man as before, and, unless the heart is changed, the new uniform only makes the rebel more dangerous than he ever was. “Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,” are the essential conditions of salvation, and anything less is but a hollow profession as useless as the flickering lamps of the foolish virgins, against whom the doors of the feast were closed.

With this first condition these men had evidently complied, and when they received the baptism of John they were undoubtedly of those who had openly confessed their sins. For over twenty years they lived under the obligations of this baptism, nobly maintaining their discipleship, and, though surrounded by the most gross and powerful idolatries of that age, yet they never wavered in their allegiance to the faith into which John had baptized them.

And, now, here comes St. Paul with the question of our text, to which they answer, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” At the first glance it seems strange that these men should make such a confession, and yet it is very pos-

sible that they represent a large portion of the Christian Church of to-day. True, we cannot go to the length of these disciples and say that we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost, for we have heard of Him ; we have heard about Him in sermons, we have sung about Him in our prayer meetings and churches, we have read about Him in our Bibles and books of religious devotion ; but when it comes to a clear, intelligent realization of His office and ministry, and what His purpose is in the hearts and lives of men, most of us are little, if anything, better off than these Ephesians. And if St. Paul were here and put the question to you, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" how many of our answers would be of the most vague and indefinite character?

Indeed, there is no phase of our common faith regarding which there is such uncertainty as that relating to the Holy Ghost. And though this is the dispensation of the Spirit, the last days spoken of by the prophet when the Spirit is to be poured out upon all flesh, and though the Church is loud in its protestations of dependence upon the Spirit for light and power and guidance ; and though many of our most familiar hymns are full of intense desire for the Spirit's help and presence, and many of our most fervent prayers call for the Spirit's life and energy ; yet withal we fail to apprehend the real nature of the Spirit, or to rightly appreciate His place and functions in the economy of grace. We are not so troubled respecting the other persons in the Godhead. Most of us have intelligent conceptions of God. We speak of Him as God the Father Almighty. We think of

Him as the Eternal King, and with His nature and attributes we are in a degree familiar. And so with Christ. We know Him as "the only Son our Lord" who came from heaven to redeem us; who was crucified, dead, and buried; and who after His resurrection ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of God, He carries on the priestly task of intercession.

Upon these two articles of our creed there is common argument; but when we come to the character and work of the Holy Ghost, there is little unity, much uncertainty, and general vagueness. But why should this be so? Has the Church been left to itself that it may formulate its own thought and expression? or has the subject been given to the individual soul to work out as a personal experience? Not so. The Scriptures are burdened with intense desire to reveal the Holy Ghost; and in history, in psalm, in prophecy, in gospel, in epistle, the chief purpose of the holy men who wrote is to bring the Holy Ghost, who inspired them, into immediate and direct contact with the soul of the believer. Everywhere, and with great clearness, the Scriptures teach the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost. All of the attributes that constitute individual life, such as will, judgment, authority, intelligence, activity, are given as among the indispensable and eternal qualities of the Third Person in the adorable Trinity. In short, we have just the same kind of evidence for the personality of the Holy Ghost as we have for that of God the Father Almighty, and in the Scriptures nothing could be more positive or definite than the language and terms which are employed to set forth

the distinct individuality and personality of the Holy Ghost. And yet there has crept into the Church a sort of half defined opinion that the Holy Ghost is some kind of an influence which proceeds from God the Father, and just as heat emanates from the fire, or as light shines from the sun, or as perfume rises from the flower, so the Spirit comes from God, giving warmth and light and sweetness to the Church. Nor is this all; but when speaking of the Spirit we frequently use the most tender and endearing terms, and we have made the dove His emblem, and with the dove we associate gentleness, helplessness, innocence. As a result of these thinkings and imaginings on our part, we have come to look upon the Holy Ghost as a mild, gentle, beneficent agent which broods upon the soul in a peculiarly sweet and tender way, and which might be compared to the warm, comforting rays of the spring-day sun, or the soft breathings of the south wind laden with freshness and perfume.

But we have no warrant for any such imaginings as these, for the Holy Ghost is not only the Third Person in the Godhead, but it is through Him that the glory and majesty of the Deity are specially revealed. When "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep," it was the Holy Ghost that brooded upon that darkness, and who brought order out of chaos, light out of mystery, and fitted this world for the sons of men. Every law that obtains in the world of nature and of life is the result of His infinite energy, and is subject to His control. He prepared Moses for his mighty work of leadership and government; He inspired Bezaleel in his tasks, so that he became a cunning

workman and a skilled mechanic; He descended upon Isaiah and the other prophets, so that the curtains of the centuries parted before them, and they saw afar off the wonders and mysteries of God.

We see, then, how complete is His authority and how absolute His government. The material, the mental, the spiritual, is each under His control, and in Him this world lives and moves and has its being. And in redemption His work is wondrously manifest. He it was who inspired the holy prophets, who overshadowed the Virgin Mary, who filled Christ with all wisdom, who revealed the truth to the disciples, who wrote through the evangelists and the apostles, and who everywhere gave evidence of His grace and power. And then, as we come to the Church, what proofs there are of His ceaseless energy and presence. Just what the sun is to the earth—giving it light, giving it warmth, giving it power, sustaining it, keeping it, blessing it, bringing life from death, bringing light from darkness, transforming it, renewing it, covering it with verdure and beauty—so the Holy Ghost is to the Church: the source of all power, the fountain of all light, the root of all strength, the foundation of all greatness, the spring of all joy, the origin of all success, and the inspiration of all triumph.

No greater blessing could possibly come to the Church of to-day, or to the individual heart, than a profound and intelligent belief in this article of our faith, and when we are able to say, and to say it understandingly, "I believe in the Holy Ghost," the most glorious era in the history of our race will be upon us. For the trouble with most of us is that we

live on the same plane with these Ephesians. We have repented of our sins, we have made public acknowledgment of Christ, we have taken our place as disciples in His Church, and we are sincere and well meaning, and try to and intend to do that which is right ; but beyond this few of us have gone. There is no glow, no zeal, no joy, no enthusiasm. What we do is done from a sense of duty or from principle, and but little pleasure or comfort is derived from it. Why is it that people do not throw themselves into all kinds of Church and religious work with the same zest and energy which men manifest in business? Why must people be urged and constrained to accept responsibility and service for God, and yet these same people will be honored when called upon to serve in social duties and functions? Why is it that fashion and custom and pleasure can command all the means and all the leisure of their votaries, while the Church and the great benevolent enterprises which are under its care languish for lack of support? Why is it that business, or politics, or even common pastimes can arouse the most intense excitement, and yet religion drags wearily along, as though its feet were incased in lead? The answer to all these questions, and scores of others just like them, is because we do not honestly and intelligently believe in the Holy Ghost. We have only attained to the baptism of John, and hence have not the zeal, the fervency, the intensity for work and achievement.

There is a soldier—he has enlisted, it may be, on the impulse of the moment, and before he has fully counted the cost or the consequences he is ordered to the seat of war. The hardship and discipline of a

soldier's life soon become disagreeable to him. He is under the command of men who have no regard for his feelings or his conveniences. He is marched through the rain, through the snow, through the burning heat. He keeps guard in the night, he digs in the trenches, he performs the most menial service. But with dogged persistence he does his duty, and though he cannot but complain because of his hard, thankless lot, yet he never thinks of desertion, but goes on to the end. That is the baptism of John. But let that soldier get possessed of the idea that his country is in danger; that he is fighting for a principle of eternal truth and righteousness; that he is a man upon whom the nation has put a solemn, an awful responsibility; that upon his fidelity and honor, home and fatherland are depending with supreme confidence—once let this idea get hold of him, and instantly he rises to that plane upon which the loftiest patriotism flourishes like a Norway pine upon its native mountains, and his soul becomes inflamed with the passion which makes the commonest man a hero, and he will endure a thousand martyrdoms rather than allow his country to suffer, or permit its flag to trail in the dust. This is the second baptism, and illustrates the effects of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

A young man goes through the courses in one of our universities, and following the bent of circumstances or inclination, in due time enters, it may be, upon the profession of medicine. He has worked with tolerable faithfulness and taken up the different studies as they came. Chemistry, with its symbols and experiments, was a tedious thing; anatomy was

more or less repulsive, and he was glad to get away from the strain upon his feelings; pathology in its varied ramifications was bewildering, and oftentimes he was lost in its mazes; but for the sake of his friends and his future he kept on until the well-earned parchment was in his hand, and he was free from attendance upon classes and clinics, and was now able to enter upon his chosen work. So far it is only the baptism of John; the hard, cheerless round of preparation.

But some day a case is put in his hands which calls out every energy of his mind; the soul within him, which had been dormant, is now quickened into life; he begins a fight with disease and death which absorbs him until every faculty of his being is brought into play; the little narrow sky of mere professionalism is lifted up until he sees the greatness and grandeur of his work, and from that moment he ceases to be a mere practitioner, but a glorious, mighty man living not for himself but for the great world in which God has placed him. Such illustrations as these could be multiplied indefinitely, for the principle applies to life everywhere.

So exactly with regard to the religious life. The baptism of John means the dull, the ordinary, the commonplace, when everything we do is from a hard sense of duty; when we render service, not because we love it, but because we think it is expected of us; and anything that we can avoid is looked upon, not as an opportunity lost, but as a relief from what is unpleasant and irksome.

But if we go on in the course which God intends, there will come a time when just as the soldier be-

comes inspired with intense patriotism, just as the physician realizes the dignity and solemnity of his profession, so the Christian enters into the largeness and fullness of divine things, and then there is an ardor, a zeal, an enthusiasm, a positive joy, in doing the will of God which transform and transfigure the whole man. Duty, which before was like the piping and iron work intended for an illumination, but which was black and cheerless, flames out with a light and beauty all its own; obedience, which before was like a dewdrop in the darkness of the night, catches the flashes of the morning sun, and has a radiance surpassing any diamond; devotion, which before was like a windmill moving with fitfulness, now has the beat and steadiness of an engine; faith, which before crept like a vessel through a fog, now sweeps on as a mighty steamer in the cloudless day; prayer, which before hardly dared to rise from the earth, now as on eagles' pinions travels the measureless sky. A glorious transformation has been effected. The body no longer dominates the soul. The mind, the heart, the spirit, are under the spell of the unseen, and the life which the man lives in the flesh is lived by faith in the Son of God.

O that this article of our creed may have a new meaning for us, and that from this time forth we may each be able to say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost," and in our own hearts fully realize that "He is the Lord and giver of life!"

“And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.”
—Luke v, 6, 7.

X.

“The holy catholic Church.”

JUST as the ivy clings around the old gray towers, adding gracefulness and beauty far beyond that of mere architectural lines, so do our most sweet and precious associations cluster about this word “Church.” The very mention of its name carries us back into the distant years, and we hear the bell ringing out upon the Sabbath air; we see once again faces and forms enter within the sanctuary, reverently bowing their heads in holy worship; we listen anew to the chorus of glad song as it travels heavenward, and the words of prayer and thanksgiving find grateful response in our hearts. To some of us this word “Church” throws back the gateway of the years, and once more we are children, taking our places with our parents, and amid the hush and holy quiet wait upon the ministry of God’s word. To one it suggests the peaceful country village, with the plain, simple building standing in its plot of living green under the shadow of the bending trees; to another it brings the memory of a noble cathedral, with towers and spires outlined against the sky, and under whose lofty arches the weary heart seeks communion with heaven. No word is richer or more fragrant than this, for around it are gathered the most tender and hallowed associations of which life is capable.

The first time to which human thought was clearly and definitely directed to the idea of a Church was in

that memorable conversation between Christ and His apostles when He put the question, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" And when Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," then followed the announcement of Jesus as to the building of His Church, and from that time until now the holy catholic Church has been in the world.

In the beginning there was nothing whatever by way of organization. Indeed, our Lord had spent no inconsiderable portion of His ministry before He had any recognized disciples. Later there came the call of the apostles and the gradual introduction of some order and arrangement, though nothing really was perfected until after the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. But as the number of the disciples was then wonderfully increased, some organization was most essential; hence we find the appointment of deacons and other officials who were to exercise authority and supervision. Then, as the work spread, and the apostles went on missionary tours all through Asia Minor and much of southern Europe, a more thorough organization was effected, until finally the Church came to have plans, purposes, order, arrangement, and discipline as perfect as that age would admit. Thirty, or possibly forty, years were spent by the first apostles in laying broad and deep the foundations of the Church of Christ, preparing it for that mighty struggle with organized Paganism upon which it entered during the first century of the Christian era. During this time the gospels and epistles were written; the fanciful and the visionary were gradually eliminated; doctrines were presented in a

more definite and concrete form, ordinances and forms were established ; faith became more positive and intelligent, and church membership obtained a clearer and more faithful recognition. Then came the centuries of pagan persecution, from which the Church emerged even more than conqueror, for paganism was driven out from Europe, and from Asia Minor and from Africa, and the cross everywhere triumphed. The faithfulness, the daring, the heroism of those years are indescribable, and "the noble army of martyrs" have left behind them a record for devotion and loyalty which will endure throughout all generations. When one thinks of all that the early Church was called upon to suffer ; of the combined and continued efforts which were made to destroy it ; of the bitter and pitiless persecutions to which the disciples were subject ; of the bribes that were so freely offered and indignantly put aside ; of the pains that were taken to thwart and hinder and oppose all who would accept the new faith ; of the comparative helplessness of that little band, and of the wealth and power of those who were arrayed against them ; the very fact that the Christian Church has not only survived, but triumphed over all its foes, is in itself a miracle only equaled by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

In these days—when the spires of the church cleave every sky, and the towers of the church grace and adorn the noblest cities of the world, and the prayers and songs of the Church are voiced in every language and tongue—to speak against the divine foundation and mission of the Church is like taking the light of the sun to prove that there is no sun ! To stand on the beach and argue that there is no

ocean, with the breakers rolling in at our very feet, may seem a daring thing, but the folly of it, the absurdity of it, excite only pity that reason could be so weak and intelligence so fearfully beclouded.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the Church is compared to a body of which Christ is the Head, and so we have the idea of government, of an active superintendency on the part of our blessed Lord, and also a close and most intimate union between Him and His people. And what thought is more full of comfort to the Christian than the blessed fact which is so clearly revealed that Christ is not simply the nominal but the actual and positive Head of the Church, and that He is governing it with infinite wisdom and power. There is a tendency on our part to imagine that when Christ "led captivity captive and ascended up on high," that He separated Himself from the things of earth, and that the Church was left in some vague way to work out its own salvation. There was no visible government. There was no high priest to assume jurisdiction. There was no seat of authority, no court of final appeal, but that, instead, each believer was to have almost supreme control. Hence, many have thought that the Church was simply an aggregation of individuals without unity, without government, without any cohesiveness or distinctive organization, and that we were no longer under law, but under grace. Following out this idea, numerous sects have been formed. Denominations have multiplied. Some are of Paul, others of Apollos, others again of Cephas, until almost every phase and variety of thought has ob-

tained recognition. People looking on have imagined that the Church was divided, that it was broken up into sects and parties, and that the unity of its early life was destroyed. But if we will only take the illustration which St. Paul uses, namely, that of the body, we will see that while he makes the most ample provision for the largest freedom and the greatest possible variety, he also secures the closest unity. To his mind the Church is a body, a body with many parts, and each part has its different functions, and by the perfect working of one part all the other parts are benefited and strengthened. There is no rivalry between the foot and the hand, no confusion between the ear and the eye. On the contrary, there is perfect harmony, each contributing to the comfort and well-being of the other. And so with these varied denominations and varieties of faith and government in the Church. Properly understood, these are only different parts of the same body. They are all under the one Head, and subject to the same authority. The differences and distinctions, therefore, are not intended as separations, but by fitting each for the highest usefulness makes possible the largest measure of good. We should then believe in the holy catholic Church, and we should take that word catholic to mean not only universal, but the richer and fuller meaning of liberality and generosity in things pertaining to religion.

Again, not only is Christ the Head of this Church, but He is also its Life. "I am the vine, ye are the branches," are His own words, and here we have the idea of a oneness of life extending to all parts of the tree. The same life that pulses in the vine extends

to every branch that grows upon it, and though there may be many branches yet the same life beats and throbs in all alike. There is danger, and grave danger too, of our forgetting this, for we do not always live up to the divine catholicity of Jesus. Unless we have His Spirit, and understand something of His nature, we are liable to become narrow and exclusive and intolerant, and forget that our Lord has other sheep which are not of this fold.

Because we have supreme faith in the teachings and principles of our Church we are not to think that the other Churches are founded upon heresies and mistakes, and are, therefore, to be condemned. It is very possible that some of the Churches that we condemn are as much in the right as we are, and are doing God's work faithfully and earnestly. No Church has all of the truth. What would you think of a great tree, as it reveled in the warmth and life of the spring sunshine, saying in itself, "I have all of the sun?" or of the river, as the light flashed upon it until it gleamed like a broad golden ribbon, "I have all of the sun?" or of the mountain, as it lifted its head into the shining heavens until its peaks transfigured themselves in the sky, "I have all of the sun?" True, each has all of the sun that it can receive, for the tree throbs with life, and the river glows as molten gold, and the mountain has a beauty and a glory all its own; but between the tree and the river there are rich valleys into which that sun pours itself, and between the river and the mountain there are uncounted miles upon which that sun descends, where every tiny flower is kissed into color and fragrance, where every seed is born into newness of life, where

harvests spring up from the darkness of the earth, and where fruits ripen and blush into rare sweetness and mellowness. And so exactly with the different Churches and the Gospel of God's dear Son. Each has all of the Gospel that it can receive, and in each that Gospel is to have its manifestation ; but the Gospel is larger than all Churches, just as the sunlight is larger than all trees and all rivers and all mountains. So then the life of Christ is in all of the Churches, manifesting itself in different orders and forms, but it is the one life, just as light is the same whether it streams through the plain glass of a roadside chapel or the stained and figured windows of some vast cathedral. What a parable and yet what an illustration we have in the incident chosen as our text ! At the command of Jesus the disciples let down their nets, and immediately they inclosed such a multitude of fishes that the net brake, and even their boats began to sink under the burden. And we, too, have our nets ; some of them may be larger than others, and some may be designed for a certain order of fish ; but when we get out where the waters are really deep, and where we have the immediate presence and command of Christ, our little arrangements and contrivances give way under the strain, and we are glad to have help from the other boats, whom we now cheerfully recognize as partners.

We cannot have too large and generous thoughts concerning the holy catholic Church. Remember the two special instances in our Lord's ministry in which He commended the faith of those who sought help at His hands were not even among the Jews, but were of the Gentiles ; for the Syrophenician

woman and the Roman centurion were regarded as pagans and idolaters.

But when we think of Christ as the life of this holy catholic Church what a sense of kinship we have with the disciples of whatever name and faith ! After all, there is only “ one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” At the cross, in the presence of His atoning sacrifice, we forget everything save that He died for us, and that in Him we have redemption and forgiveness of sins. Just as an orchestra may be made up of many instruments, some of wood, some of brass, of different shapes, makes, qualities, and tones, from the bass drum with its solemn beat to the tender breathings of the violin, yet at the command of the leader they all unite on the one chord and send out the richest harmonies until the air is vibrant with melody ; so the holy catholic Church, though differing in ritual and faith and polity, yet when Christ, who is our life, raises that pierced hand, instantly there is the glad burst of praise, and as with one voice the chorus ascends, “ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain ! ”

And then we believe not only in this great, broad catholic Church, but in the *holy* catholic Church. Holy, because it is the Church of Christ, separated, set apart, consecrated to His service, and commissioned to do His will ; holy, because in it the Holy Ghost is ever at work, and by His divine energy and power leading it on from conquering to conquer ; holy, because to it have been committed the sacred oracles, thus making it the pillar and ground of the truth ; holy, because it stands in the world as the witness for God, causing men to think of the unseen and eternal ;

holy, because entrance to it is conditioned upon sincere sorrow for sin and a determination to "keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life;" holy, because fidelity to its teachings means the preparation of the soul for the inheritance of the saints in light. When we speak of the Church as holy, we do not mean that each individual member has attained to such conditions of sanctity as raise him above his fellow-men, and that church membership involves the profession of a holiness upon which no mark or stain may be found. No. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." The members of the Church are often weak, frail, unfaithful, unworthy, doing the things which should not be done, and leaving undone many of the things that were commanded them. And still it is the "holy catholic Church," for its purposes are holy, its work and mission are holy, and it means in every part of its life to do the will of God. The Church is not to be judged by its individual members any more than you are to judge of a painting by the different colors which the artist has laid upon his palette. The Church is to be judged by its general life, by its general work, by the results which have come to pass through its labors; and who can look upon the Church from this standpoint without gladly confessing that it represents the highest and best life of the world, the life of unselfishness, the life of devotion, the life of patient loyalty to the truth, the life which suffers cheerfully for the benefit of others, the life which pours out its blood and its treasure for the well-being of humanity. The best things that we have to-day, the things that make for

the highest and the broadest civilization, the things upon which all true life rests as upon a strong and deep foundation, the things that mean the purity and permanence of the home, the uprightness and integrity of the heart, the nurture and growth of character, the development of the truest and noblest type of man ; in short, the things that give to our era its distinctive place in the history of the centuries, have all come to us through the "holy catholic Church," the Church "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone."

Then, let me ask, are you a member of this holy catholic Church? If so, thank God! for membership and faithfulness to its obligations mean in the end a call "to the fellowship of the Church triumphant, which is 'without fault before the throne of God.'"

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ** Himself being the chief corner stone.”—Eph. ii, 19, 20.

XI.

"The communion of saints."

THE first view of Mont Blanc is usually disappointing. The traveler had heard so much of this famous mountain that he is prepared to see a vast, wondrous pile rising in sublime grandeur, its head crowned in eternal snow, its icy peaks flashing in the sun, its stateliness and majesty unapproached and unapproachable. He cannot, therefore, conceal his surprise when he sees a mountain not standing out by itself splendid and solitary, but one only of a chain, and, seemingly, little higher than the others. But as he waits in the valley until his eyes become accustomed to the measurements of the sky, gradually there grows upon him the supremacy of that one mountain which he came to see, for he sees that the summits of the other mountains lose themselves upon its mighty bosom, and that its head dwells in a heaven distinctly its own.

And so with this article of our creed. When we first think of it there is seemingly nothing of special value or significance in these simple and quiet words, except a mere declaration of our faith in Christian fellowship, and the communion of believers; but when we wait and meditate, and our souls rise to the altitudes of these spiritual Alps, ere long we make the discovery that to believe intelligently in the communion of saints means the highest joys and the divinest experience of which the soul is capable.

There are two very general and yet most erroneous ideas of saintship. One is held and promulgated by the Roman Catholic Church, namely, that in order to be a saint there must be, over and above all moral qualities and spiritual graces, the power to work miracles, and that if this power is withheld, no attainments, however exalted, can atone for the deficiency. The man may spend his nights in prayer, his days in deeds of mercy ; his life may be one of singular beauty and consistency ; he may enter with rare devotion into all the work of the Church, and his reputation for devout and holy living may extend far and wide ; and yet, unless the thaumaturgical element is included, he fails to obtain a place on the roll of the saints. Whatever else the saint of the Romanist is or is not, he must be a miracle worker. This is the supreme test, and if this is met the name finds an honored place in the calendar. And so in the annals of that Church, and in the lives of its saints, we read of marvels and wonders and miracles far exceeding anything of apostolic or prophetic days. This idea of saintship is naturally restrictive, and limits the saints to a very small and select number.

The other idea is held by many in the Protestant Church, and suggests that a saint is a person of extraordinary meekness, one who is never ruffled, never disturbed, never affected by the common, or even the uncommon, affairs of life, but who moves quietly and calmly in his orbit as a star in the heavens, without variableness or shadow of turning. Such a character, of course, cannot be swayed by any strong passion or moved by any mighty impulse. No

temptation, however fierce, can arouse him ; no fascination can allure him ; no snare overthrow him. Upon him this world has no power, for he lives above its petty concerns, finding all his joys and occupations in that which is divine and spiritual. But while a saint of this type may be to some an example and an ideal, to most of us it means a bloodless, heartless creature, without pity, without sympathy, without any of the tender, lovable qualities which belong to a complete human being. And so, what with the miracle worker of the Romanist and the soulless statue of the Protestant, the popular conception of the saint is something almost unearthly, and far beyond the reach of common mortals. The term saint, therefore, has fallen into reproach, and much more frequently is applied as a scornful epithet rather than a mark of praise or respect.

But when we turn to the Scriptures and examine the basis upon which saintship rests, we find no warrant for any such conceptions as these. The simple fact is we have confounded the heavenly with the earthly. We have mistaken the angels for men, and the men for angels. We have lost sight of the very important elements of flesh and blood. In our strainings after the divine we have ignored the human, and so saintship has been made an unreal, shadowy thing, no more fitted to bear the weight and burden of this life than cables of glass to hold a ship in a storm.

✓ The saints in both the Old Testament and the New were men, not angels ; men of like passions with ourselves ; men struggling with sin and doubt and temptation ; men fighting with themselves and overcoming

by the grace of God ; men falling, but rising again, and renewing the conflict with greater eagerness than before ; men, like Elijah, whose faith at times was clouded ; men, like Moses, whose patience broke through its restraints ; men, like Abraham, who gave way to subtle deception ; men, like David, who fell in the time of trial ; men, like Peter, who shamefully denied his Lord ; men, like James and John, who in the rush of anger would call down fire from heaven ; men, like Thomas, who doubted in the face of the strongest testimony ; these were the saints of the olden time, not impossible and unattainable ideals, but men of flesh and blood, with whom we have sympathies and feelings in common. Nor can we be sufficiently grateful that God has allowed these lives and characters to form such an important element in His word. Otherwise, we would be utterly discouraged. It would be as a student going into the gallery of some famous painter, and looking at the completed masterpieces as they hang upon the walls, and then to be told to go home and paint like that. Like that ! Why that sky meant a hundred failures before its tints were realized ! That face meant weeks and months of discouragement and defeat ! That grouping meant sleepless nights, and seasons of abject misery ! But when that student is taken from the gallery to the studio, and when the master admits him to the secret of his labors and burdens, and when he sees that success is only to be obtained through repeated and heartrending failure, then, and not till then, will he realize the possibility of any achievement of his own. The falls and failures and mishaps of the Bible saints are both warnings and encourage-

ments, and God was divinely kind and merciful in preserving for us these records.

But while these things are so, nevertheless saintship has a substantial basis in the Scriptures, and some things are demanded as a qualification for this rank.

First. *There must be reconciliation with God.* This we see very plainly in the chapter of our text, and the "now therefore" with which St. Paul begins this noble passage implies both a condition and an experience, and makes these words to be the doorway into "the household of God." "Now therefore"—something already having taken place, some work having been accomplished in the soul, as a result of which the way into the household is opened, and the communion of saintship is made possible.

Reconciliation suggests estrangement. There would be no necessity for reconciliation had there not been some unhappy differences leading to strife and separation. When we speak of friends being reconciled, we mean that, by explanation, by apology, by mutual compromise, they have reached an understanding by which their former relations may be resumed, and all unpleasantness cease. The use of this word here signifies exactly the same thing, and teaches us very distinctly that before we can enter "the communion of saints" our differences with God must have been adjusted, and a complete reconciliation effected. Naturally we are at enmity with God. We may deny, if we will, the doctrine of original sin, and may regard the story of the fall of man as a mere fable, but the fact that there is sin in the world cannot be disputed. We see it all about us. We breathe it in the air, we hear it on every hand,

we feel it in almost every heart-throb. We may call it by certain high-sounding terms such as the force of environment, the laws of heredity, the abuse of nature, the waste of talent, the failure of opportunity, but the nomenclature of philosophy or the altitudinous phraseology of science in no wise alters the condition or changes the facts; and we see drunkenness and crime and dishonesty and shame and hypocrisy and oppression and pride and ambition and jealousy and avarice; in short, we see sin, sin in ten thousand hateful forms, cursing and blighting this world, throwing its vile shadow upon the babe asleep in the arms of its mother, and bringing shame and sorrow into every home under the bending skies.

Men tell us sometimes that we are the children of nature, and that if we will not permit ourselves to be warped and biased by religious prejudice, and distorted by unhealthy teaching and training, we will grow up in honor and manhood, and attain finally the noblest and purest conditions. But when nature is left to itself, what does it do? Are there harvests in the fields? are there fruits in the orchards? Left alone nature is prolific, but that prolificacy is mainly in weeds and brushwood and bitter herbs and sour fruits, of little value for sustenance and life. Nature has no religion. In themselves the fields are utterly irreligious; they have no conscience or honesty; and if they were not plowed and harrowed and dressed and planted, they would simply run riot, and the world would die of starvation.

And what is true of the world of nature is even more true of the world of human life. Naturally we take to sin. We go counter to the will of God.

Instead of being spiritual we are carnal ; instead of being pure we are impure ; instead of being kind and tender and loving and forgiving we are harsh and angry and vindictive and cruel. Here and there one may rise up like the young ruler and say, "None of these charges can be brought against me : my life is spotless and beyond reproach ;" but when the real core of that ruler's nature was probed it was found that at heart he was selfish and unfeeling and avaricious. O, why do men waste their time in piling up arguments when they know that the foundation is nothing but sand ? Any man who looks into himself honestly knows that he is alienated from God, for he has no desire to love Him, or serve Him, or read His word, or keep His commandments. Just as the river, under that mysterious force which controls it and impels its movement, flows down the mountain side and pours itself into the great sea, so naturally sin dominates and guides the life, and at every step the soul only gets farther away from God.

Hence, before "the communion of saints" is possible the whole current of life must be changed, and the soul, by repentance, by prayer, by the forsaking of sin, come into conscious fellowship with God.

Second. *There is a desire to conform to the mind of Christ.* Religion is not a theory, it is an experience ; it is not a profession, it is a life ; it is not a name, it is a character ; and when Jesus said, "Follow Me," He gave an epitome of both the nature and purpose of His Gospel. Christ was more than a teacher, more than a prophet, more even than a sacrifice ; He was an example, and to be a Christian means simply to be like Christ. Just as the Egyptian sphinx

rises from the wilderness, of sand, and compels the wonder and admiration of the traveler, so the mighty personality of Jesus looms up out of the Scriptures, and in this "second man, the Lord from heaven," we see what religion is meant to accomplish in the souls of men. And just as He "learned obedience by the things which He suffered;" just as "He for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame;" just as He "resisted unto blood, striving against sin;" just as He, the Captain of our salvation, was made "perfect through sufferings," so His disciple is to follow Him through evil and through good report, and at last with Him be crowned with glory and honor. The whole plan of God, in what we call the scheme of the atonement, is embraced in one sentence, and that is "to be conformed to the image of His Son." Religion is not a matter of prayers and offerings and beliefs. To have fellowship with the saints does not mean the acceptance of certain doctrines and the recognition of certain forms; for, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." So, then, what we see in Him we are to look for in ourselves, and before we can have "the communion of saints" we must have communion with Him, through whose grace and Gospel saintship only is possible.

Third. *There is harmony with the purposes of the Holy Spirit.* This is essential to a perfect basis of saintship, and without this there could not be a "communion of saints." For this fellowship is spiritual; it is a communion of souls, it is the interblending of hearts, and the divine, all-pervading Spirit is the only agent by which this kinship may be established.

And what are the purposes of the Holy Spirit? In a word, the redemption of men, the salvation of the world, the elevation and enlightenment of humanity, the disclosures of truth, the unfolding of the divine Will, the establishment of righteousness on the earth, the bringing in of that glad day when all men will love God and serve Him, and when all shall know Him from the least even unto the greatest. It is to bring about these results that the divine Spirit is in the world, and for which He has given of His power and energy to men. This is why there is a Church, and why that Church is spoken of as the "salt of the earth," as the leaven in the meal, and why from the beginning the Church has received such care and attention from God. The Church was not intended to be simply a place of rest, a sanctuary, where we might meet and worship, but rather as a fort, an armory, where we should exercise ourselves unto godliness, and thus equipped go out and make war against sin in all its forms, and conquer this world in the name of truth and righteousness.

And so before we can have fellowship with the saints we must have sympathy with their purposes, and this we can only have by being in harmony with the Holy Spirit, from whom these gracious and divine purposes have come.

You see now the basis of saintship, reconciliation with God, conformity to the mind of Christ, and harmony with the purposes of the Holy Ghost. Nor is there here anything that is beyond the reach of the humblest and feeblest Christian. This is not a saintship that is restrictive, an ideal unattained and unattainable, a shadowy, mysterious thing; on the con-

trary, it is most simple and definite, for what does it mean but our having sought and found forgiveness from God, trying as best we can to follow in the steps of our divine Master, and seeking in some humble way to accept the teachings and leadings of the Holy Spirit. And if we are trying to do these things we are saints, saints of God, saints on earth, and we belong to the goodly fellowship of the redeemed. The world may not regard us as saints, our friends may think that we are anything but saints, even the church of which we are members may utterly refuse to call us saints, but we are saints withal; for if God has pardoned our sins and adopted us into His family, if Christ has received us as His humble but earnest disciples, if the divine Spirit is helping us to overcome evil and temptation, we are saints, and we have an inheritance among the sanctified. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

Just a word or two now as to the communion which this saintship involves:

First. It is SOCIAL. The word "communion" means this, and implies a cordial, genuine fellowship among all professing Christians. How fully we see this in the history of the early Church. What warmth, what heartiness, what whole-souled people we meet in the Acts of the Apostles! Their sorrows and persecutions doubtless had much to do with the strength of their attachment one to the other, but the sincerity of their love had perhaps even more to do with the ultimate success of the Church. And nowhere should there be such sweet and tender communion as in the house-

hold of faith. Here all differences of rank and station have no place. Here "the rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all." Here we meet upon a common footing, having the same hopes, the same joys, the same conflicts, the same victories. Here we unite in the same hymns, offer the same prayers, read the same word, and hear the same Gospel. Here the competitions of business are put aside; the rivalries of outside life are forgotten. Here we come together as "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ;" and the dearest, sweetest, tenderest, and most delightful friendships of life should be those formed in the household of faith.

Second. It is FRATERNAL. There are saints who do not worship with us. Christ has those who do not belong to this fold. "The communion of saints" is a large communion. We may call the sea by different names; we may run our imaginary lines through the ocean, but it is one mighty deep, and is subject only to its own laws. No genuine Christian, or rather no large-hearted, generous Christian, will suffer himself to be cut off from any part of the great brotherhood, no matter under what name that brotherhood exists. All good men are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. Every man who is honestly striving to do the will of God has his membership in the "communion of saints" and a share in its fellowship. It is not a question of names, but of sympathies; it is not a matter of creeds, but of character; and wherever we see a man trying to help this world, to bless it, to refine it, to do good in whatever way he can, it is our privilege to claim kinship with that man as one of "the communion of saints." "Master, we saw one

casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him." He was not one of the recognized disciples, and perhaps knew very little about either the mission or the character of Jesus, but he was doing good in his own way, and so Jesus answered, "Forbid him not," and He rather rebuked the disciples for their interference with the man's work. Only go deep enough, and you will strike the mighty rivers that flow in the heart of the earth, and only go deep enough, and in all faiths, and in all churches, there will be found honest, upright, God-fearing men and women, who belong to that great company which no man can number, and who have "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

Third. It is SPIRITUAL. "But ye are come"—not *coming*, but *come*—"unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Not only the living, but the dead; not only the saints on earth, but the saints in heaven; the great and good of all nations and of all times: these are among the mighty hosts with whom the soul has fellowship. You believe in "the communion of saints?" Then you have something in common with every noble life, every holy character, every devoted, consecrated soul that was ever in this world. You have kinship with Abraham and Moses and Isaiah and John and Paul; with the glorious company of the apostles and prophets, and with all the holy martyrs. The great names that stand out in history as beacon lights upon the

shore belong to you. Their joy is your joy, their strength is your strength, the comfort and inspiration of their lives are yours, and the power and glory of their examples are your most priceless heritage. You believe in "the communion of saints?" Then you are living in the midst of mighty but unseen spiritual forces, forming a communion that throng the sky, that crowd the heavens, that reach even to the throne of the eternal God.

Fourth. It is ETERNAL. The fellowships of earth have no continuance. Only the strongest and purest friendships survive the years of strife and passion. The playmates of childhood outgrow each other. The companionships of youth are usually impulsive. As the years come and go the circles gradually narrow, until even before midlife is attained many a man is standing almost alone.

But once a soul enters into the "communion of saints" he makes friendships which are not for time, but for eternity. There is a love that is stronger than death; there is a love which cannot be entombed; there is a love which defies the shocks of time and decay; for that love has in it the power of an endless life; it is a love which, like its Lord and giver, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." The exchange from the mortal to the immortal will not affect it only as it may remove the dross, the clay, the impurity; and there, where the soul shall know as it is known, where the misunderstandings of earth and the infirmities of the flesh will all have passed away, there where the "communion of saints" will be forever unbroken, into what depth and richness will grow the friendships which were formed here!

“Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”—Luke vii, 47.

XII.

“The forgiveness of sins.”

IN that strange journey of the ehildren of Israel—a journey which, read in the meanings of the New Testament, seems to be a parable of human life and the struggle of a soul from darkness to light—we find that soon after leaving Egypt the travelers came to the wilderness of Sin. When first entered the narrowness of the passage gave promise that beyond the mountains, which east their mighty shadows upon the pathway of the fugitives, a rich open eountry would be found, thus ending at once their perils and distress. How great, then, must have been the disappointment when, instead of green fields, grateful springs, and everywhere the evidenee of luxuriance and prosperity, nothing is seen but barrenness and desolation. No peaceful villages, no waving harvests, no flowing rivers, no flocks and herds, not even the sound or sight of life. Before their strained and anxious eyes there stretches a vast, dreary expanse of barren soil and gleaming sand; while on one side flows the Red Sea, cutting off that way of escape, and on the other side rose the frowning mountains, hopelessly and implacably barring their passage. The little stock of provisions with which they had left Egypt is now utterly exhausted, and, seemingly, nothing is left but to lie down and die.

And if this pilgrimage of the Israelites is to be read as a parable, and if we are to find in it the his-

tory of a soul struggling upward into light, do we not see in this wilderness of Sin a phase of mortal life with which, alas! we are all sadly and fearfully familiar? For what is there in all this world that is so pronounced and prominent and omnipresent as sin? Nowhere can we escape from its influence, nowhere evade its power. It walks proudly abroad in the day; it moves stealthily along in the night; it plants its banners under every sky, and speaks in all languages and tongues; it reigns in the palace of the king as well as in the home of the peasant; it sets man against man and nation against nation; it instigates war; it creates discord; it promotes anarchy; it breeds confusion and disorder and ruin; it is barbarous and merciless, cruel and vindictive; it spares neither man, woman, nor child; it has a thousand names and exists under myriad forms, but its purpose is ever the same; it pollutes the air that we breathe; it shadows the homes where we dwell; it profanes the books that we read; it deadens the ear to the cry of the poor; it turns the heart into stone; it makes men selfish and avaricious; it fills the world with hatred and revenge; it causes its victims to trample upon the holiest and purest affections of the soul, so that a mother will forsake her helpless babe, a father turn away from the cry of his children, a son neglect the parents who gave him birth, a daughter wander out into waywardness and shame; it will poison and destroy the noblest affections of which human hearts are capable, and cause separations and rivalries more cruel than death. There is nothing that it will not do, nothing that it has not done, and the frightful chapters of human life which make the tragedies of

this world are the result of its presence and power. Why are thousands and tens of thousands of our fellow-creatures shut up within prison walls? Why are vast multitudes suffering all manner of privation and pauperism and want? Why are so many men utterly broken and dispirited, waiting only for death and the grave? Why are so many homes covered with a shadow infinitely worse than that of mere bereavement and affliction? Why are so many noble ambitions unrealized, so many hopes shattered, so many lives an utter and irretrievable failure? O, the bitter misery of this sad world! and far more bitter and far more miserable than we can ever dream! And the cause, the only cause, is SIN!

But what is sin? We are familiar with the word, for surely we have heard it many times, and we are familiar with its results, for they are all too patent; but are we familiar with the meaning of the word, and do we know just what it implies?

Without attempting anything by way of an exhaustive definition, let us glance for a moment or two at an experience in the life of Moses which may help us to a fuller understanding of this word "sin." You will remember that when the Hebrew chieftain descended from the holy mount, bearing the tables of stone upon which the law of God was written, he was horror-stricken at seeing the children of Israel dance in mad idolatry around the golden calf, and, after giving vent to the mighty indignation which stirred his soul, and punishing them for their shameless ingratitude, he went back to God and asked that he might see His glory. He needed help; he needed inspiration; he needed comfort. He was depressed,

discouraged, disheartened. Only a few weeks gone, and, though the people were eating God's manna and saw a new miracle every morning, yet so weak and unstable were they that they lapse into the idolatries of Egypt, and in feasting and revelry offer their degrading worship.

With divine tenderness God listened to the prayer of His discouraged servant, and gave him a vision of His character and purpose; and so there passed before him a wondrous revelation, not of God's power and wisdom and majesty, but of God's mercy and pity and grace, the Almighty voice proclaiming forgiveness of "iniquity and transgression and sin."

Here we have three words, three distinct words, each with its own meaning, and though sin as a generic term may include all three, yet when separated they have more perfect applications.

From that word "iniquity" we derive such meanings as warped, twisted, wrenched, distorted, and as applied to our moral and spiritual life we can see their force and significance. The splendid life which God originally designed for His creatures—the life of uprightness, of harmony, of exquisite proportions and symmetry, when there would be a perfect poise and balance of all our powers—that life has suffered hideous deformity, and instead of rising from the earth in stateliness and beauty and flowering like the palm tree in the unsullied sky, it burrows in the mystery and darkness as the gnarled and twisted roots of the wayside elm. Think you that God ever meant that the providing of food and raiment and shelter should become the chief objects of our life and thought, and that the gratification of our physical

desires would fill out nearly all of our time and strength? Think you that life is realized according to the divine plan when our hopes and ambitions are almost exclusively selfish and personal, and that to gain our ends we would allow no scruple to stand in our way? Is the life that we see all about us—the life of struggle, of defeat; of pain, of pleasure; of ease, of desire; of reckless indifference, of brutal selfishness; of wanton enjoyment, of heartless conquest—such as God marked out for us in the beginning? Surely no one can have such meager and dishonoring thoughts of God as would make Him responsible for human life as it is now? Have you ever looked through a pane of glass in which there was a knob, a bulb, some malformation? How strange the people seemed as they went by! Twisted, bent, deformed, thrown into the most peculiar shapes and makes, no one straight, all crooked and hideous. Now just what that pane of glass seems to do, iniquity has done. Hence the world as it now is. Hence human life as we see it everywhere.

“Transgression” we all understand. It means the breaking of a law, the violation of a command, the open defiance of a known statute, deliberate and wanton disobedience, an absolute refusal to acknowledge authority. So, then, not only is the man morally deformed, perverted and distorted in his spiritual life, having wrong thoughts of God, but he translates those thoughts into acts, and actually goes so far as to rebel against the government of his Lord and Maker! And when a man rebels against a pure and just government he is a traitor; he is guilty of treason; and if he continues in his rebellion his very existence is a menace to the

public peace and welfare. That word "rebel" has an ugly sound, and when applied undeservedly arouses the most bitter resentment. But what shall be said of those who are living in rebellion against God, trampling His law under their feet, profaning His day, blaspheming His name, dishonoring His word, refusing His Gospel, denying His claims, and in every way showing their disregard and contempt for Him? Are they not rebels? Are they not in open rebellion? And yet here they are breathing His air, living upon His bounty, dependent upon Him for everything they enjoy, and still actually using His mercy and goodness to make weapons with which they may wage warfare against Him!

Only that we have grown sadly familiar with these things, we could hardly think that they are true. We thought it the vilest treachery for men to take the training which our government gave them at West Point, and then use that training in rebellion against the government; but how much better are we, to whom God has given reason, intelligence, talents, opportunity, wealth, education, capacities for service and enjoyment, who take these very gifts and endowments and use them for our own selfish ends and in rebellion against Him?

"Sin" means simply the missing of a mark, as an arrow misses the target and falls aimlessly upon the ground. The man who sins, therefore, misses the mark that was set before him, and though the arrow of his ambitions flies high in the air, though the arrow of his pleasures goes singing and whizzing merrily by, though the arrow of his desires is steel-pointed and feather-tipped, yet the mark is not

reached, and the man's life is a failure. And what a dreadful thing it is to fail in life! A man may fail in business, and yet keep the confidence of his friends and maintain his own self-respect. A man may fail in his ambitions, and yet be all the stronger and better for his failure. A man may fail in many of his noblest hopes and purposes, for the rewards of this world are not always assured. But to fail in life, to miss the very thing for which we were born, to have set before us a divine mark, and that mark meaning the most glorious success, to fail in this means a failure in everything. There is no such thing as success in life to anyone who misses the real mark. We talk very foolishly about success and of people who succeed, but it is more than probable that many of these very people have made only the most sad and lamentable failure. We may gain wealth, or fame, or honor, or social position; we may be known for high intellectual attainments and versatility of talents; we may secure many of the prizes for which men eagerly contend, and yet after all miss the mark and fail utterly of success. Anything less than God's standard of character; anything less than a strong, pure, noble life; anything less than a faithful, honest, loyal heart; anything less than an earnest desire to conform to the likeness of God's dear Son; anything less than a life that will be a help and blessing to the world, is a failure, for it has missed the divine mark; and though such a life may be crowned and garlanded with every form of earthly success, yet these are but as flowers and wreaths laid upon a grave, and will wither and die away. If you are living in sin, then, remember you

are missing the mark, missing it fearfully, and when death comes your quiver of arrows is all spent, and you have failed to do the very thing for which you were born.

But now, admitting that we have been "shapen in iniquity," and have lived a perverse and distorted life; admitting that we have broken God's law, and have lived in actual transgression against Him; admitting that so far we have utterly failed to reach the mark which has been set before us, what hope have we of forgiveness, and how can we be forgiven?

There is no forgiveness in *nature*. Nature is implacable, and insists upon the utmost farthing when any of her statutes are violated. If we sin against the body no despot is more merciless, and into the prison of weakness and infirmity we are cast, there to be delivered to the tormentors until we pay everything that is due.

Neither is there forgiveness in *law*. Law is rigid, inflexible, hard as iron, and pitiless as fate. So exacting is it that even ignorance of the command is not recognized as a plea, and with its sword and scales it demands and insists upon the utmost penalty.

Nor is there forgiveness in *man*. No more obdurate is the rock, no more remorseless is the sea, no more stern is the mountain, than the unrelenting, unforgiving human heart. Instead of pity for the helpless and the fallen, we treat them with coldness and contempt. Instead of thinking sadly and tenderly of those who have made a wreck and failure of life, we pass them by in shameful haughtiness and pride. Let a man once fall into poverty and sin, let a woman once lose her glory and name, and what have we for

either of them? "We may forgive, but we can't forget," and because we can't forget, our forgiveness is but a mockery and a sham. And yet here we are with perverse hearts, with rebellious lives, with the years of failure as our record, and we must have forgiveness or we shall die in despair.

But though nature is implacable, and law is merciless, and man is unrelenting, still there is a way open by which we may have the "forgiveness of sins." The past may be blotted out, the heart may be cleansed and renewed, the life may be so changed that failure shall give place to success, and the soul "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." No one need despair. With such a Gospel as that of God's dear Son there is hope for anyone and everyone. Though the sins be as scarlet, though they be red like crimson, though the crime be black as that of David, though the life be a waste to its very last hours as the dying thief, though every law human and divine has been trampled under foot, yet if the conditions are met and the soul comes to God in penitence and prayer, such is His amazing love and infinite pity that He not only pardons, but He abundantly pardons. He not only receives the wayward prodigal, but He sees him a great ways off and goes to meet him, and there is absolutely "joy in the presence of God over one sinner that repenteth!"

What more thrilling proof can we have of the divine forgiving grace than in the scene suggested by our text. How beautiful, how tender, how exquisite, is the compassion of Jesus! "Thy sins are forgiven." A poor, lost, sinful creature, she was profaning by her presence the home of Simon, who

wondered that Jesus suffered the wretched and guilty woman to even appear before Him, and yet she hears the divine words of forgiveness, and from that hour becomes a child of God. We have need to believe in the forgiveness of sins, for how many times do our sins blot and stain and defile! There is none that doeth good. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." What day is there in which we do not sin? The outward act may not always be there, but the thought, the passion, the desire, the pride, the revenge, the spirit of evil within us, how it sways and influences us! We need, then, to pray for "the forgiveness of sins," for we are all sinners and all guilty in the sight of God.

You believe in "the forgiveness of sins?" But you must first *confess* your sins. "For if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Have you done this? Have you gone to God in humbleness and contrition, and before Him made sincere confession? It means the humbling of pride, the subjugation of self, the surrender of will, and cannot be done in a moment, but it is the essential condition by which forgiveness may be secured.

You believe in "the forgiveness of sins?" Then you must *forsake* your sins. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." It is one thing to deplore the wasted and wretched past, to be tortured with the pangs of remorse, to be haunted with the horror and memory of our sins, but it is another thing to rise up in the hope and strength of God and forsake our sins, abandon them, renounce them, and determine with the help of divine grace to live "righteous before God, walking in all the

commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

You believe in "the forgiveness of sins?" Then you must *overcome* your sins. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is not enough to confess, or even to forsake; the fullness of Christian character is only attained when the spirit of the hero enters in, so that "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." And now may we not ask: Have you experienced "the forgiveness of sins?" Can you say: "O Lord, I will praise thee: for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me?" If so, ere long you will sing with the great company, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.”—
Luke xxiv, 39.

XIII.

“The resurrection of the body.”

THE ministry of Christ, from the morning of His resurrection to that of His ascension, is invested with profound mystery. And the more earnestly we study this period of our Lord's sojourn on the earth, the more it baffles and eludes us, and the more incomprehensible it appears. Had He been anxious to establish His divinity, and prove the reality of His resurrection, how easily such a course opened out before Him. He could have gone to the temple, and in the presence of the wondering multitudes presented Himself, bearing the marks of His passion and death. He could have stood once more at the bar of Pilate, and compelled that haughty and brutal despot to acknowledge Him as the Jesus whom he had dared to crucify. He could have summoned the Sanhedrin, and that council, which, blinded by passion and prejudice, had sentenced Him to death, would have trembled at His appearing. He could have gone to the hill of shame, followed by crowds of wondering, awe-struck people, and pointed to the very cross upon which many of them had seen Him die. He could have gathered his disciples, and led a procession infinitely greater and more enthusiastic than when He entered the city amid the waving of palms and the shouts of “Hosanna.” He could have taken the title which was so strangely written on His cross—“Jesus, the King of the Jews,” and had Himself crowned in

the very chamber where they had given Him a diadem of thorns and in mockery invested Him with the purple robe. There was nothing that He could not have done, and so established the proofs of His Messiahship that doubt would have been forever impossible.

But He took a course that was the very opposite in every particular. He shunned publicity; He avoided recognition; He appeared only to His disciples, and even to them His coming and going were so shadowy and elusive as to awaken doubt and misgiving.

Now there may be those so gifted with spiritual apprehension, and whose intuitions are so delicate and keen, as to understand the mystery of these forty days, and so perhaps they can tell us how and where our Lord spent all of this time, and also why His public ministry was entirely suspended. Before His death He was with the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the multitude of sinners, teaching and preaching of the way of life and salvation; but after His resurrection He limited His intercourse entirely to His disciples, and apparently had no relationships with the outside world.

But whatever mystery is involved in the movements of Christ at this time one thing is clear, namely: His appearances to His disciples demonstrated in the most substantial way the fact of His resurrection, for He made no less than ten manifestations of Himself, and each manifestation had its own character and significance. And these manifestations were made, not only in the night, or in the gathering shadows of the evening, but in the morning and at noonday; they were made, not only to one or two

avored disciples, but to the whole company, and even to as many as five hundred at once ; they were made, too, under such circumstances that even Thomas had the opportunity to apply the test of personal and positive touch, so that the fact of His resurrection became to them a reality from which nothing could ever disturb them.

Hence we find in the ministry of these men that the resurrection of Jesus was the theme upon which they put supreme emphasis. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses," was the subject of their constant discourse, and a risen Christ was the war cry of the Church during the first years of its being.

It is possible that we make a mistake when we put the cross upon our towers and steeples, and give it the place of honor in our thought ; for our hope is not centered on the cross, but in a Christ who was victorious over the cross ; who conquered death, who spoiled principalities and powers, and who brought life and immortality to light. The mere fact that Christ died for humanity is not in itself a proof of his divinity, for other men have died for humanity, and the history of every nation is full of such heroism and self-sacrifice ; but the fact that, after having made the offering of His life, He rose from the dead, stamps His sacrifice with the divine seal, and enthrones Him in the Godhead.

But in these different appearances which Christ made to His disciples we cannot but observe that some mysterious change was evidently accomplished in our Lord. He had a body, and yet this body seemed to be so sublimated as to be superior to material obstruc-

tions and gravitating forces. In the particular circumstance suggested by our text He entered the room, though the doors were all securely fastened "for fear of the Jews," and when the disciples saw Him "they were terrified and affrighted and supposed that they had seen a spirit." And at Olivet you remember, while in the act of blessing the disciples, He rose bodily from their midst and reentered the eternal heavens.

Have we here a hint of the resurrection body with which we shall enter upon the larger and more glorious life? Is there anything in this manifest superiority of Christ to the common laws of matter and life that may help us to understand such a passage as that which declares that He "shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body?" Can we so interpret these appearances as to realize that here we may see in what way Christ has "become the first fruits of them that slept?" Will the grave be only a crucible by which the dross shall be separated from the gold, and will the spiritual body be so adjusted and harmonized that material forces will no longer control it?

These are questions of profound moment, and for uncounted years the world has waited anxiously for some answer which, in part at least, would be satisfactory. As it now stands, the body is not only the prison in which the soul is held, but it is the tyrant, the imperious despot, who controls and governs at its will. And this body and soul are in everlasting conflict. When the soul would fain raise itself into the realm of spiritual being, into the sky of pure, refined thought, and find congenial compan-

iouships in the upper heavens of life, the body, like a dull, heavy eelog, drags the soul baek again to earth and eompels it to burrow in the ground. Just as a poor prisoner looks out through the grated window and longs for the freedom of the life that lies beyond the prison walls, so the soul erowds itself up to the narrow windows of the body and yearns for the glorious liberty which only can be obtained outside the restraints of physieal hindranee and limitation. The soul may have the aspirations of the eagle, and would fain sweep through skies of undiscovered thought, but the body keeps that soul within the eircles of the barnyard, and we are forced to be content with a mouthful of eorn and a plaee to roost. The body has a sort of dead-line supervision over the soul, and when the soul comes to that dead-line, the senses, like so many sentinels, forbid a single step beyond. Our whole life is a eontinuation of fleshly limitation and embarrassments. We are not able to do a hundredth part of that which we desire to do, and which we feel we ought to do. For here is this body, with its weaknesses, its burdens, its needs, erying out for food like a hungry ehild, demanding sleep like a wretched slave after a day of toil in the fields, ealling for elothing and eare and attention, and insisting upon its demands being heard, thus limiting our lives to a eirele almost as narrow as that of the poor beast tied in the pasture. We are all eonscious that life, as we now live it, is very ineomplete and unsatisfactory. We feel sometimes as if God had given us a great castle, a castle with rooms and ehambers and eorridors and battlements, from which we could look aereoss the valley

and see in the distance the outlines of "a city which hath foundations," but except at intervals we are shut up in one room, and the doors that lead to the upper parts of our mansion are closed, and we cannot enter upon our real possessions. Sometimes we hear voices in the corridor, and music steals through the halls and passages, and we realize that in that upper life there is a noble and glorious existence originally intended for us, but the body stands at the foot of the staircase and bars our way as we would fain ascend. Every day we have the proof in ourselves that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," for even here the flesh wearies, the blood clogs, the senses weaken, the nerves relax, the limbs falter, and though like a soldier scaling the ramparts, the soul sees victory within its grasp, yet it falls back in confusion, because the body lacks the strength and endurance which are necessary. No wonder that the apostle cried out, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But we must be careful to bear in mind that these weaknesses and limitations are the results of sin, and that the body as we now see it is not the body as it originally came from the hand of its Maker. The first Adam was made in the image of God; he was made without sin, death had no place in that first creation, consequently the ills that flesh is now heir to did not afflict and distress the human form divine. But when sentence of death was pronounced, immediately the process of dissolution began; weaknesses manifested themselves, feeblenesses set in, pains and infirmities followed one upon the other, and henceforth life was simply a hopeless struggle with dis-

case and distress. In the beginning man was made sovereign of the earth, of the sea, of the bending sky, and over the whole creation had absolute dominion; but now, so fearful have been the inroads of sin, of disease, of mortality, that he is unable even to save himself, and staggers helplessly into the waiting grave. What God intended for the first Adam no man can tell, but if the second Adam is to be understood as his image and type, what magnificent possibilities he must have contained! Everything in nature was under the control of the second Adam. He had but to speak and the winds fell back, hushed at the mere sound of His voice. The raging seas became as pavements of crystal at the touch of His feet. And when He rose from the dead the very laws which hold the world in its place were silently put aside, and without effort or strain He showed how perfect was His authority and control.

So, then, when we think of the resurrection body, we must not allow ourselves to be confused because of this body of flesh and blood; for in point of fact we know really nothing of this body, nor the marvelous powers and qualities which are hidden in its depths. Sin has so enfeebled it, wasted it, deformed it, that we have come to look upon it as a mortal coil to be shuffled off with feelings of grateful relief; and yet when once the forces of evil are expelled from it, and its weaknesses and limitations disappear, this body may have elements and potencies of which we do not even dare to dream.

An old organ for many years stood in a village church, and every Sunday, in a narrow, restricted way, led the devotions of the simple, country people

who came to worship God. The organist, now bent and gray, touched the same keys, and the congregation listened to the same strains, until every note and tone had become familiar, and no further variety seemed possible. But one day a stranger took his place in the organ loft, and before even the service had begun the old organ was filling the little church with wondrous harmony; and when the hymns were being sung marvelous chords of untold richness and quality mingled with the strain, until the people wondered from whence this strange music came. Even after the service was over the congregation remained listening with rapt amazement as the stranger swept his hand along the keyboard, and brought out such a wealth and variety and volume of sound as filled them with wonder. It was the same old organ, but it was under new conditions and new control, and the music which had lain sleeping in its pipes was now for the first time revealed. You cannot tell what is in that body of yours; but wait until all the sin has been removed from it; wait until its weaknesses and limitations disappear; wait until it is changed and made like unto His glorious body, and then it will be seen as it was intended in the beginning, not a clog nor a hindrance, but a perfect vehicle and medium through which the soul would have perfect manifestation. The question that we so often ask, "With what body do they come?" seems to be answered as we look upon the form of our risen Lord, and we can feel the meaning of St. Paul's words, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

But there is yet another truth which these appear-

ances of Christ make very manifest, and that is the continuance of personal identity. There was evidently a marked change in Christ, a change so distinct that for the moment His disciples did not recognize Him; but, just as when we gaze intently upon the face of a dear friend whom we have not seen for many years, and upon whom these years have left abiding marks, at first we are confused and puzzled, when all at once something in the voice, the bearing, the countenance, flashes in upon us, and the recognition is instant and complete. So it was, you remember, in the case of Mary, and also with the two disciples at Emmaus, and again here with the assembled company.

If there is one truth more than another which the world is anxious to discover relating to the other life, it is that of personal recognition. Here we only know each other through the medium of the body, and while there may be affinities and sympathies and spiritual intercourse, yet we are entirely dependent on the body for recognition and identity. How, then, shall we know each other when this familiar form will have gone down into the darkness and mystery of the grave, and when the spiritual only will remain? This is a question of vital importance, and upon its answer the hopes of millions anxiously depend. We know by our own hearts that love is stronger than death, for though our dear ones die, yet our affection for them not only survives the grave but grows deeper and stronger. That child that once nestled in your arms has been gone from you these many years; but have the years taken away anything from the love which surged in your heart! That boy, whose young

life was so rich and full of promise, was removed so long ago that the date of his death seems like a distant memory, but your affection is as strong and sweet as though your sorrow was only of yesterday. That husband whose care and tenderness made life so grateful and affluent has been gone so long that the world has forgotten him, but you have not forgotten him, and the tones of his voice still sound in your ears. That patient, quiet mother, whose loving, gentle ways inspired your young life, and gave it its deepest, noblest joys, passed away long years ago, but is she not still your mother, and is her memory not the most precious possession of your heart? We know that our love reaches beyond the grave, and that the pure, deep affections of which we are capable cannot be entombed. The question, therefore, that concerns us is, are there in the other life such possibilities of recognition and reunion as will preserve the best and the holiest of the life that now is? But have we not in the appearances of Jesus the most abiding and satisfactory answer that this question can possibly have? For do we not see that while in some respects He was changed, yet essentially He was unchanged? He was the same Jesus after the resurrection that He was before, nor will the millenniums in heaven change Him, for we are distinctly told that "This same Jesus shall in like manner return." The other life, then, is not a dim, vapory, cloudy, ethereal, super-spiritual existence without recognition and memory, for we shall not only see Jesus, but we shall be like Him, and we shall know even as we are known.

You believe, then, in "the resurrection of the body?" You cannot do otherwise if you accept the

plain teaching of the Scriptures, for resurrection does not mean a new creation, but a raising up of that which was once buried in the earth. Science may not explain this doctrine, nor reason comprehend it, but the Scriptures declare it, and God's word abideth forever.

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”

“But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.”—2 Tim. i, 10.

XIV.

"And the life everlasting."

THE most important question that ever fell from human lips was asked by the afflicted and desolate Job long centuries ago—"If a man die, shall he live again?" And everything depends upon the answer which this question receives. For if life has its terminus at the grave; if death means a deep, eternal sleep, without the hope or the possibility of an awakening; if human existence includes but a few years of fitful, anxious struggle, and then a burial in the silent earth, the only wise course for mortals to pursue is to eat, drink, and be merry, without regard to either conditions or results. What is the use of ideals, if these ideals cannot possibly be realized? What is the use of struggling against weakness and passion if that struggle is absolutely hopeless? What is the use of noble purposes and lofty ambitions when death may come down upon us at any moment, and the life end in utter disaster? Why deny ourselves any pleasure, or suffer any restraint, when we gain nothing by such denial, and only lose opportunities for enjoyment? What is the value of unselfishness or devotion or self-sacrifice when we gain nothing either here or hereafter? Why should we not push people out of our way if we are stronger than they are, and secure the best that life can possibly afford? Why should we not trample honor and affection beneath our feet so as to reach the things that we so ardently desire? If this is all

the life we have, if there is no judgment bar at which we must give account, if there is no possibility of reward for the virtues that we may have practiced, or punishment for the sins of which we have been guilty, what are we better than the beasts of the field, or the brutes that perish? We are no better, we are not even as well off as they are, for they have less struggle, less care, less anxiety, less burden, less pain, and their lot is to be preferred to ours.

You see then how much depends upon the answer that is given to this question of Job, and how intimately and vitally it affects the whole course and conduct of life.

We are sometimes told that the idea of immortality emanates from the Scriptures, more particularly from the New Testament, and such a passage as we have used as our text is quoted in proof. In reply may we ask—Did Columbus create the western hemisphere, or did he only bring it to light? Was this continent not here centuries before Columbus was born, or even Spain had a national existence? In the very beginning, “When the morning stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy” at the new, great world which had come into being, and upon which God would so divinely reveal Himself, this mighty continent formed a part of that glorious creation, and all that the Spanish voyager did was to open it up to the vision and conquest of the Old World. And so with this doctrine of immortality. Centuries before the advent of the Son of Man, when the divine incarnation was accomplished; long before the voice of the Baptist sounded out like a trumpet in the wilderness; long before Isaiah uttered his glowing hopes

and predictions of the One who would bear the government upon His shoulder, and before whom the mountains would break forth into singing, and the trees of the field clap their hands; long before David poured out his soul in tender, exquisite song, and prophesied of Him whose name shall endure forever, and whose glory shall fill the whole earth; long before even Moses ascended the holy mountain to receive the law at the hand of God, the thought of immortality was in the world; and not merely a vague thought founded upon superstition and desire, but a belief absolute and universal.

There is nothing more surprising than the unanimity with which all nations and all religions unite on this doctrine of immortality. Begin if you will in the desolate life of the arctic seas, and travel the entire length of the continent, and you will not find a single tribe or nation—from that of the Greenlander, who places his dog beside the grave of his child, or the Indian who buries the bow and arrows with the body of his dead chief, down to the Patagonian, whose home is at the extreme limit of our hemisphere, and whose life is so crude and primitive—in which there is not a distinct belief in a life beyond the grave; or if you take the continent of Asia, a continent where religion has had such varied expression, manifesting itself in Buddhism, Brahmanism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, and where for thousands of years these forms of religion have held undisputed sway dominating uncounted millions of men and women, you will find that just as the Gulf Stream rolls across the Atlantic, preserving itself against the waves and storms, and remains unbroken in its course until it falls warm

with life and strength upon the shores of northern Europe, so through this vast ocean of Asiatic religion there flows one mighty current which nothing can affect or disturb, and that is a profound belief in the doctrine of the soul's immortality. It is this which brings the Chinese to their pagodas, the Hindus to their temples, the Persians to their altars, and which prompts their every act and service of religion.

Even in Africa, that dark, mysterious continent which so steadily and doggedly bids an angry defiance to civilization, and where for so many ages the lowest forms of barbarism have intrenched themselves, when we come to know anything of the life of the interior tribes we find among them the same desires as prevail among the other nations for an immortal life. The German philosopher well said, "Before there was a Bible there was a religion," and in every instance the basis of that religion is in the belief of a life beyond the grave.

But how shall we explain or account for this universal belief, a belief which is not affected by conditions of race, religious training, or national life? It will not do to say that it is the product of superstition, for the people who are the least superstitious are those who hold it most tenaciously. Neither can we assume that it is the result of training and tradition, for among those who have had no guidance whatever it reveals itself with the greatest possible distinctness. Nor can we affirm that it flourishes only under certain forms of national life, for it flourishes everywhere. If it were confined to any one race, or nation, or continent, or religion, we might possibly account for it as a special product or result; but when we find it among

all races, and among all nations, and in all continents, and in all religions, we are forced to the conclusion that it is an essential feature of our common humanity, and belongs to the deeper instincts of which we are all possessed.

But why should man have another life? What has he done? What is there in him? What are his claims upon a life other than the one which he now has in the flesh? Take the first of these questions—What has he done? He has suffered, sacrificed, dared, endured. He has borne for the sake of others; he has all through the generations given himself for the life of the world. With a devotion that is simply marvelous, with a heroism that is more than sublime, with a patience that is almost infinite, with a fidelity that is truly amazing, man has labored and bled and died, and his long-suffering and unselfishness are written on every page of this world's history. Why have men been content to endure the tyranny, the treachery, the oppression, the cruelty, the wrong, which have been put upon them for all the generations, never rising in their majesty and wrath until they have been goaded into it by the heartlessness and hatred of those who had dominion over them? Why has man surrendered freely almost every right to which he was entitled, and quietly suffered the most grave indignity and scorn? Why has he put aside his natural desire for revenge, and permitted his enemies and adversaries to end their days in peace? Why has he held himself in subjection, even when his most fearful passions were aroused, and has trampled upon lusts and desires that like serpents were everywhere crossing his path? We are prone sometimes to dwell upon the depravity

of human nature, but it might be well to vary our theme and speak of the nobility of human nature. When you take up the pages of history and read, you will find patriotism, generosity, magnanimity, splendid courage, noble impulses—in short, the highest qualities possible for us to imagine. And what reward have men received? In what way has the world requited them for their discoveries, their inventions, their reforms, their achievements, their example, their influence? In most cases by mockings, by scourgings, by imprisonment, by banishment, by excommunication, by almost every form of torture of which malignity and hatred were capable. And yet they have not been discouraged, neither have their sufferings discouraged others; and so we see to-day the great mass of this world's population quietly bearing up under loads of poverty and pain and anxiety and care at which we cannot but marvel.

And have you ever thought that almost everything that men do is done for others, and not for themselves? True, man has undoubtedly a personal, and as some would think a selfish, interest in all that he does; nevertheless, the applications and the benefits extend far beyond himself. He builds bridges for others to pass over; he builds ships for others to sail in; he farms land that others may be fed; he raises cotton and wool that others may be clothed; and the more carefully you study and follow out the varied occupations in which men engage, the more perfectly you will realize the great laws of unselfishness which underlie even the whole framework of commercial life. The fact is that the eyes of men turn naturally to the future, and, though we may hardly be aware of it, we

feel instinctively that there is another life where the injustice and inequality of this life will have recognition, and where full compensation will be had for everything that has been suffered here.

Then take the second question—What is there in him to require another life? and here we feel as though no answer was really necessary. For the very moment that we calmly and thoughtfully consider ourselves, our varied powers of mind and spirit, do we not instantly realize that if we are to attain to anything of the growth which we feel is not only possible, but essential, to our true development, we must have a longer time than the few years we have here? You can easily raise a sunflower or a hollyhock, because time as an element hardly enters into the matter of growth; but if you are going to raise an oak or a cedar, you must have not only years but centuries. And the strangest thing about these natures of ours is their illimitability. No man ever yet reached the point where he had exhausted either his powers or the subject of his investigations. A tree attains its growth, and beyond that it cannot pass. A horse or an elephant attains its strength, and there is nothing more for it in this world. But these souls of ours are apparently infinite in their possibilities of growth and attainment; and the more they know, and the more they acquire, the greater is their desire to know, and the larger is their capacity to acquire.

So far as we can now see there are absolutely no limits to the reach and achievements of the mind of man, and it would be impossible for us to imagine this mind reaching a stage at which it must stop, having then attained the measure of its possibilities.

And this is the only thing in all the world which does not realize its full growth here. We see the flower work out its complete destiny from the tiny bud of the springtime to the rich, full rose of June, and we know that that flower has realized every latent force and potential being that were intended for it. We see the harvests coming up out of the darkness and mystery of the earth, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," and as we look across the fields mellowing in the autumn sun, we feel, indeed we know, that that corn has met all of the conditions that centered in its life, and that nothing more was possible to it. We see the tree gradually putting on strength and beauty, slowly traveling from the stage of the sapling and reaching that of the full-grown tree, until at length it comes to the fullness of life; and as we look at it so vigorous and so graceful, we know that it has attained its zenith, and realized every possibility which originally was invested in it. And the same is true of the entire brute creation. *Ne plus ultra* can be said of every beast, whether of the jungle, the prairie, or the farm. But this cannot be said of man. He has in him certain forces and qualities which have never yet been reached. He has in him elements of power and greatness which so far have not had any chance for development. Some of the very highest attributes in the whole range of his endowment are unknown even to himself, and anything less than immortality will be insufficient for his real growth and attainment. So far he has been concerned mainly about food and raiment and shelter. He has been absorbed in making a home for himself and his children. He has hardly had time to think of

the blue skies and the sounding seas and the opening flowers. And so all of the poetry of his nature has been stifled, the music of his soul has been repressed, the joy and affluence of his inner being have been restrained, and he has been compelled to dig in the earth and toil in the mill and slave in the store, and hence has had no real chance to get at himself or to know of what spirit he was made. Once in a great while opportunities come to people, and we are fairly amazed at the magnificence of the results. Who would have thought that that gaunt, awkward rail-splitter would have developed into a statesman of such surpassing merit, that God intrusted to his care the destinies of the nation during the most critical time in its history? Who would have thought that that taciturn, unattractive-looking man working in his little tannery would yet become one of the greatest soldiers that the world has ever known, and whose name yet fills the earth? But had the opportunity not come these men might have died, and the world known nothing of their real greatness. There must be another life. Here we are limited, restrained, hindered; we are interfered with in a hundred, yea, a thousand ways, and anything less than immortality will not meet the demands and conditions of our spiritual and intellectual life.

Now, take the third question—What are his claims to another life? and here the case is so strong and clear that further argument and discussion are unnecessary. In himself man may not have any claims, but when you remember that he is a child of God you see at once how absolute are his hopes; for God will not deprive His own child of eternal life. And

all these yearnings of ours for higher and diviner things, all these aspirations of the soul for purity and holiness, all these illimitable possibilities which we know and feel are ours, are but the proofs and marks of our divine relationship. Hence, when we rest our claim upon the fact that we are God's dear children and are trying to serve Him and do His will, we have a basis stronger than any argument could possibly be, for here we appeal to God's heart and we know how that appeal will result, for God is love, and "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

You believe, then, in "life everlasting?" You are wise in doing so. Such a belief gives all dignity and character to the life that now is, and is in harmony with the nobler and deeper instincts of our being. But such a belief means more than a simple acceptance of this article of the creed; it means a preparation for that life, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”—Matt. vii, 11.

I.

“Our Father.”

HOW familiar these words are! We have heard them in almost every imaginable circumstance, until they have been stamped indelibly upon our hearts. We learned them at our mother's knee; our fathers repeated them around the family altar; we have listened to them in the great congregation. We have heard them chanted by the white-robed choir under the mighty dome of a vast cathedral; and we have heard them whispered by pale and quivering lips in the valley and shadow of death. We have heard them in some great tabernacle by the sea, where thousands had met to worship God, and the sound has been as the voice of many waters; and we have heard them out upon mid-ocean, in the roar and din of the tempest. We have heard them in the little country church, or the grove of pines, over which bends the listening sky; and we have heard them in the gloomy shadows of the prison, from lips stained with blasphemy and crime. But though heard under such a variety of circumstance, yet they were always appropriate, and seemed to meet the exact conditions of that place and time; and whether it be the baptism of an infant, the burial of a parent, the marriage of a princess, or the coronation of a king, no service, however elaborate or imposing, is deemed complete without the prayer beginning with the words, “Our Father which art in heaven.”

And yet, with all this familiarity on our part, it is very possible that some of us do not quite understand the full meaning of these words. For though they are very simple, they are wondrously profound. They are perhaps the deepest, the most wonderful words ever spoken to men, and are a revelation of divine character and purpose.

And what is the first thought that comes to us as we dwell upon this word "Father?" Have we not here a revelation of the *personality* of God, such as can be obtained in no other way? Here we come into contact with an actual Being—a Being whose existence we are able in some measure to comprehend; and instead of God being a vast illimitable Spirit, hiding Himself in the depths of His own Infinity, unknowable to human thought, and beyond the reach of earthly intelligence, our text reveals Him as a Person, and a Person placed in such relations to us as to bring Him within the circle of every life.

Our ideas of God are very generally vague and unmeaning.

One time we think of Him as the eternal Creator, by whose word the heavens and the earth were made, and our thought depicts Him in the center of creative energy, flashing out upon the skies of infinite space stars and blazing suns like sparks from His anvil.

Another time we think of Him as the Spirit of life diffused throughout the universe, operating everywhere as the life-giving and life-sustaining principle—a principle that manifests itself in myriad forms, and in which "we all live, and move, and have our being."

And another time we think of Him as the "King

eternal, immortal, and invisible," presiding over the destinies of a universe, directing everywhere the movements of His providence; and with a wisdom that never fails, and a power that never falters, accomplishing His divine will.

But you see how vague all this kind of thinking is. It makes God simply a force, an energy, a providence. It deprives us of all sense of personality, and as we look out into the infinities of space, hoping somehow to discover Him, we are met by the cry of the patriarch: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." But all this vagueness and uncertainty pass away the very moment we apprehend the truth which our text contains. The dim and the shadowy utterly disappear. God is no longer hidden in thick darkness. The invisible is made visible. The immortal and the eternal are clothed upon with a distinct personality, and this word "Father," as used here by Jesus Christ, becomes as a shining speculum into which heaven reflects itself, and in which we can see the face and form of "God the Father Almighty."

But notice, in the second place, that God is not revealed as the Father, but *our* Father. Now, what are we to understand by this? Are we to regard this passage as a mere form of expression, conveying the general idea of universal Fatherhood, but not capable of any deeper or more intense meaning. The Jews called Abraham their father, and in a certain but remote sense he was, as they all descended from him.

The Czar of Russia is called father by his people, and he always addresses them as his children. Is this the idea implied here? Is the relationship to be of this vague and uncertain character; and are we to imagine Him as our Father only in a universal sense, and which makes no direct or special appeal to our affection? If this be so, then the word Father is nothing more than a title of respect or reverence, and has no particular force or significance.

But this was not the meaning of Christ. He tried to convey the idea that in the dearest and closest application of the term we were the children of God; and not children simply through the creation of Adam and Eve, from whom we all have descent, but actual children, born of God, having God's life in us, bearing in some degree the image of our divine parentage, and the inheritors of eternal and spiritual qualities because of our relationship.

And you will find all through the ministry of Christ that this was the central thought in His teaching. Every other truth that fell from His lips was related to this truth; and just as our planets swing around the sun from which they all derive light and life, so the teachings of the Lord Jesus moved in divine circles around one central thought: God the Father, man the child. And if we would discover the secret of the Saviour's life, if we would know the purpose which brought Him from heaven to earth, if we would understand the enthusiasm of His humanity, if we would fathom the meaning of the cross, the grave, and the resurrection, if we would know why redemption was a mystery beyond even the reach of angels, and why a universe wondered at the incarnation, turn

simply to our text, and here we have the key to the whole scheme of atonement, the solution to that problem which has baffled the ages. For if we can think of ourselves as God's children, born from above, and having God's life and God's Spirit within us, the cross is no longer a mystery standing out against a fearful background of justice and judgment, but we see in it the expression of a Father's infinite love, who, to save His children from death, Himself bare our iniquities, and suffered for us on the tree.

I trust that this thought of close and personal relationship with God is clear to you all. For everything depends on this. If you regard yourself as a mere unit in the great mass of life, a pebble on the beach of existence to be trodden down by every passing foot; a leaf in the dense forest of humanity to be caught by every wind and whirled at its pleasure, having no special claim upon God, and no distinct place in the world, then your lot is a sad one indeed. But if you think of yourself as God's child, as having had your life from Him more closely and more distinctly than from your mother, and as being possessed of His Spirit to such a degree as to become actually like Him; if you think of your life as a part of God's life made manifest in human form, and that your body is the real temple of the Holy Ghost; if you think of your future as coequal with God's future, and to be spent in His infinite and eternal presence, then your life is instantly deprived of everything that is dull and commonplace, and you are made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

In an earthly sense fatherhood implies, first, *Provision*. And is there anything in all life more won-

derful than the sacrifices that men make for their children? We often speak of a mother's love, a mother's care, a mother's devotion, and every word is deserved; but the father's part in the burden and sacrifice of life must not be forgotten. For in nine cases out of ten the father is the breadwinner of the family. He is the provider. Upon him the home depends. And from morning until night, year after year, he is found at his place of toil working earnestly and with cheerfulness, so that those dependent upon him may have "bread enough and to spare." And many are the sacrifices that he makes on their behalf. Many an enjoyment he willingly foregoes so that they may lack no good thing. For them he takes long journeys; for them he works early and late; for them he defies the storm and the cold; for them he hopes and plans; and for them, from young manhood to old age, he gives the best years and strength of his life. Nothing is more beautiful, and nothing so thoroughly reveals the divine life in man, as this spirit of devotion and sacrifice manifested in so many homes. The heroism, the manliness, the loyalty, the uncomplaining submission reveal an integrity of purpose and a chivalry of mind which at times are almost inestimable.

Christ saw all this in His day, and it touched Him to the very quick; for His eye was keen for manhood and nobility of soul, and He said: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" From the less He reasoned to the greater, from the human He appealed to the divine, and from the fatherhood of

men, weak and erring as it is, He taught the superlative Fatherhood of God. And so this whole question of support over which we have struggled and fought, this provision for our needs which has been the dark shadow falling upon so many of our lives, all this is met by an argument from which there is no appeal; and in the words "how much more" we have a guaranty broad and deep as the heart of an infinite God.

2. *Protection.* And is it not in this that fatherhood is preeminent? The very word father seems to suggest protection. And when a man looks upon his child as it lies in his arms, or sleeps in its cot, its weakness, its dependence, its helplessness, appeal to all the chivalry of his nature; and if the true spirit of the father is there, he would rather die than allow that child to suffer harm.

In the dark days of the French Revolution, when the guillotine was doing its deadly work in Paris, and when the flower of the French nobility were suffering at the hands of the murderous Tribune, a father and son were flung into prison, and after the form of a trial the son was condemned to death.

On the morning of the execution, when the jailer stood in the corridor and called out the names of those who were to suffer, the father, who had kept awake all night, while the son lay in a heavy stupor on the prison floor, eagerly responded when his son's name was called, and with the light of a strange gladness on his face died for the boy who was dearer than life. And real fatherhood never stops short of this. Every true father can understand the cry of David over the murdered Absalom: "Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

And if we have such feelings as these, and if we are capable of such devotion and sacrifice, to what greater lengths will the infinite and eternal Father go? And if even the untamed savage will interpose his breast to meet the glittering tomahawk, or fling himself against the murderous spear in order to protect his child, how much more will our heavenly Father do? To compare our love with His is as a grain of sand against a mountain, or a dewdrop to the heaving sea, and yet our love is stronger than death. What, then, may we expect from Him? What depths of meaning there are in the passage, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

3. *Education.* It is not enough that the child be fed and clothed, and that protecting arms and influences be thrown around him, but he must also be educated up to a certain standard. And the devotion that some men manifest in this particular is most striking. Many a man will strain himself to the last degree so as to give his children all the education that he possibly can. And many a child is kept at school, when every day means harder work and additional sacrifice on the part of the father. But the father knows that without education his children will have little chance in these days. Now, when competition is so keen, when labor is so cheap, when unskilled service is in so little demand, something more is necessary than mere muscle and brawn.

And then, too, the father is ambitious. He is anxious for his children to succeed. He desires for them the best and most useful places in life, and so he is glad to do everything that is possible by which they can be helped to make their way in the world.

Now carry this thought higher up. Transfer it from the plane of the human to that of the divine. Put God in your place, you take your child's place, and the instant that you enter into the real meaning of this truth, your whole life will become strangely luminous, and the mystery that has often enveloped you, as a thick cloud enswathing a mountain, clears entirely away, and you see divine purpose and divine meaning, where before were mist and gloom.

For what is all life but a great school? And what are the things that come up to us every day but the teachings of that school? And what is God doing by His grace, His providence, His mercy, His love, but putting us through a process of education; opening our minds, enlarging our thought, developing our faith, strengthening our judgment, maturing our understanding, expanding our sympathies, and gradually fitting us for positions of trust and usefulness in His coming kingdom? And this idea runs through the entire economy of life. God permits us to dig in the fields, to work in factories, to write in offices, not because in this way we are to earn our living, but that, like children playing with blocks, we may learn the lesson upon which the game is founded. The loaf upon our table is no less a miracle than the manna that fell in the desert; but God allows us to handle and carry the loaf, that we may be taught the deeper truth hidden within. How to meet adversity, how to withstand prosperity, how to overcome difficulty, how to be patient in tribulation, how to value and exercise faith, loyalty to trust, devotion to duty, faithfulness under the strongest temptation, courage and self-reliance—all these are developed under the

teachings of God's providence, and life in its every part is a divine school having lessons of the divinest character.

The headlines in the copy books are often hard to follow, the problems on the blackboard are often beyond our comprehension, the grammars and the text-books often baffle our thought; yet in this way God is working in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure," and at the same time helping us to "work out our own salvation." And then God has ambitions for His children. He is anxious for their highest success. He desires that every gift and quality in their endowment may be developed to its full extent. It is His wish that in this life they come off more than conquerors, and in the other life have a place at His right hand. And so the teaching goes on. New experiences are given. Life is constantly varied. Hope, faith, trust, endurance, are transferred from the spelling-book to our hearts. Honor, integrity, manliness, purity, are changed from simple terms into living experiences. The ups and downs of life form characters and make words, and these words have meanings after a time. Thus it is that "all things work together for good to them that love God," and they are "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

4. *Training.* And though we have put this last, it is the most important of all. For however well a child may have been favored in other things, without proper training the life will be a miserable failure. More lives are spoiled through a lack of training than from anything else. Many a young man goes out from home to fight the battle of his life with the odds against him from the very start, because his early

training was neglected. If a child is pampered from the beginning, if its every possible wish is granted, if it successfully rebels against parental restraint and family discipline, if it gradually obtains sway in the household, and meets no will stronger than its own, almost inevitably that life will be a ruin, and the son who was meant to be a staff for the father's hand will, instead, be a rod for the father's back. A true father, though he rules in love, will rule nevertheless. His children will respect him, and do him reverence. Although neither harsh nor arbitrary in his government, yet that government will be firm and positive. For his children must be restrained. They must be denied many things. They must be taught patience and self-control. They must understand that there are other interests besides theirs, and that other people and other things have to be considered. The selfishness, the egotism, the petulance, which enter so largely into childhood, must give place to healthy and genuine virtues; and though the father may be able to open his hand and supply nearly every desire of his children, yet at times that hand must be tightly closed and his ears deaf to the most earnest appeal.

And, now, have we not here a key to nearly all of the mystery of life? Have we not here a solution of some of the strangest providences that have befallen us? Can we not see here why certain things are withheld from us, why certain things have been taken from us, why certain things have been given to us? How many times have we allowed the mystery of life to take possession of us, and we have wondered and brooded until our thought was completely wearied; and yet in our own homes almost every day we were

doing the very things for which we had been finding fault with God. In the exercise of our prerogative we have chastised, we have rebuked, we have restrained, we have withheld, and all the while thought we were acting from the highest and the purest motives, and for the best good of our children; but when God, who is the only wise Father, attempts to do the same things by us, only in an infinitely more tender and kindly way, we instantly cry out in terrible distress, and imagine that He is dealing harshly with us. And unless all of our prayers are answered as we desire, we think that the divine government is stern and arbitrary, and God's hand as unyielding as fate.

And yet it is more than possible that the very things which have been withheld from us will accomplish far more for our real good than the things that have been given. We have a thanksgiving every year for the blessings that God has sent. We ought to have another thanksgiving for the blessings that have been denied; and of the two the latter should be the deeper and more sincere; for it takes a greater love to withhold than it does to give. To give is easy, to deny is hard. We often give to our children because we are weary with their importunity, when at the same time a deeper and a truer love would have refused. At the battle of Cressy, when the armies of France and England met in fearful conflict, the young Prince of Wales rushed into the very thickest of the fight. Supported by a few daring spirits, he performed prodigies of valor, but at length was almost completely surrounded by the French knighthood. Seeing his dangerous position, a messenger was despatched to the king for immediate help, which, strange to say,

was instantly refused. "Return to those that sent you, Sir Thomas," said the king; "let the boy win his spurs!" and when the message was carried back every arm struck out with new power, and the chivalry of France fell back as before an army of giants. By withholding help that day the king saved his son from mediocrity; he made him the hero of Cressy, the Black Prince of England, and secured for him an immortal place in history.

And this is just what God is doing for us. The help from the hills, for which we so often look, would detract from the real glory of our life. The highest heroism is not possible only in desperate circumstances. To have the same mind that was in Christ requires an experience of the cross. To be worthy of a place at our Lord's right hand means a bitter cup and a bloody baptism. But though "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." I want you to believe, I want myself to believe, that all the training of life is fatherly in its design and character. It is not chance, it is not accident, it is not misfortune, it is not circumstances; it is God, and that not for His pleasure, but for our profit, "that we might be partakers of His holiness."

"Our Father *which art in heaven.*" Heaven is the place where God is at home, and home is always associated in our thought with our Father's house. When the great festivals of the year come round, one after the other, home has a sacredness peculiarly its own. The father's house is the Mecca of uncounted thousands, and to it the children return

from near and from far. And even in after life, when the hearthstone will be shattered, the ingle nook deserted, and the dear familiar forms of the old homestead have faded out of sight; yet, when we think of home, our thoughts instantly fly back to our father's house, and we become children again. And so heaven is something more than a celestial city; something more than a place of wondrous beauty and delight; it is our Father's house, the home prepared for His children. It may have streets of gold, and it may have gates of pearl, but it is home nevertheless; and as our Father's house, it is the dearest and most sacred spot in all the universe. The heaven of which the poet often sings is too vague and too visionary to afford much genuine pleasure; the heaven of which the pulpit often speaks is too stately and too magnificent for plain, simple people to enjoy; but when we think of heaven as our Father's house, we have at once a sense of *home*, which touches the deepest pulses in our soul. And in our Father's house there are many mansions, and our elder Brother, who came to visit us in our afflictions, has gone home to prepare a place for us; and soon the Father will send for us, and we will go home to be "forever with the Lord."

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.”—Exod. xx, 7.

II.

“Hallowed be Thy name.”

WHAT a sharp, striking, almost bewildering, contrast there is between the mount of the wilderness, where God in august majesty and mysterious grandeur gave His law to Moses, and the mount by the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus sat with His disciples and unfolded to them the Gospel of the new kingdom! In the one, the mountain stood out sublime, solitary, the mighty sentinel of the desert, grim, silent, forbidding; girt about with a sanctity which neither man nor beast might invade; in the other, the mountain could claim no preeminence, for it formed but one in a chain of hills each as graceful and picturesque as itself; while at its feet peaceful villages quietly nestled, and on its expansive brow multitudes were assembled. In the one, thunders roar, lightnings flash, trumpets sound, smoke ascends, the skies flame, and the mountain trembles to its deep foundations; in the other, there is nothing to break the stillness of the morning hour save the ripples of the lake, the song of the birds, or the calls of the fishermen as they return from the labors of the night. In the one, only one man was singled out as worthy of ascending the holy mount and listening to the awful voice of God; nor was he admitted to this exalted privilege until days of observance and sanctification had been fulfilled; in the other, the people came from every part of the country; there were no limits, no restrictions,

no ceremonies of preparation, so that vast multitudes were assembled to hear the words of Jesus. And yet, while there was this remarkable contrast in the circumstances that surrounded these two scenes, there is a wondrous harmony in the two revelations. For the declaration on Sinai and the sermon on the mount are not only alike, but they are alike in every particular, and we cannot study either one without entering into the thought and spirit of the other. We have a way of speaking of different dispensations, such as the prophetic, the mosaic, the patriarchal, until we have almost persuaded ourselves that the Christian dispensation is altogether distinct from those which have gone before; but God's thoughts and purposes have been the same in all ages and in all conditions, just as the Mississippi is the same, whether it is throwing itself over the Falls of St. Anthony, or flowing into the bosom of the Mexican Gulf. How plainly we see this in our text, for what is this but the third commandment, only deepened, strengthened, brought from the level of restriction and prohibition to the divine altitude of holy petition, so that, instead of the imperative and commanding "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," we have this most tender and gracious prayer—"Hallowed be Thy name."

At the first glance it would seem as though the purpose of Christ in these words was to prevent the careless or irreverent use of the name of God, so that it would not be profaned in common or frivolous speech. But as we look more carefully into this petition we can discern a far deeper intent. For it is very evident that the object of Christ is to bring His

disciples into such relations with God as to not only make lightness and trifling impossible, but to so invest His name with sacredness and meaning as to hallow it and set it apart as the most divine possession of the soul.

And here let us call to mind the peculiar significance of names among the ancients, and especially the Hebrews. A name then was more than a mere form or sound of words; it was rather an expression of qualities, and was meant to denote something of the nature and character of the person to whom it was applied. The very word signifies this, for if you will trace it up to its roots you will see that from it we derive our English verb "to know." Originally naming and knowing were synonymous terms, so that when a person was named he was regarded as known: name therefore means that by which anything is known, that which defines and describes certain qualities and attributes of which it is possessed. Hence God's name is not to be understood as a title, but an indication of His character, and distinctly expressive of the divine essence and being.

It would be impossible within the limits of an ordinary discourse to give even the most meager explanation of the varied names of God as we find them in the Scriptures; we shall therefore have to content ourselves with only a very few of the general meanings which His name implies.

His name means **POWER**. In one of the Psalms we read, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God;" and in another, "Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite." One of the prophets tells us

that "He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion. When He uttereth His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures." Here we see that the sublime work of creation was accomplished by Him, and that under His direction and control the mighty forces of nature manifest themselves. When we think of a Being, therefore, who has power to create such a world and such a universe, with what profound reverence should we dwell upon His name! How great, how glorious, how awful must He be! How infinite the resources at His command! What mysterious depths of being and energy! For there was a time when not a star gleamed in the heavens, nor sun blazed in the sky; when not a voice broke upon the infinite solitudes, nor angel strain was heard in paradise; when there was nothing in all the boundless realms of space save the mighty Spirit of the eternal God, and yet He had but to speak and dazzling orbs of light circled in the azure deeps, and a universe stood ready to obey His word. Once let the thought of creation really enter your soul, and ever after you will hallow God's name. The reason that we are irreverent or trifling is because we have not taken time to think. But when we begin to realize anything of the immensity, the grandeur, the awfulness, the sublimity which are involved in creation, the name of God will have for us such sacred meaning that it will be hallowed and sanctified in our deepest heart.

His name means WISDOM. The more intimately we become acquainted with the works of God and understand their structure and intent, the more profoundly are we impressed with the wisdom which they reveal. Nature has no waste, no weakness, no blemishes, no imperfections. We see everywhere the most perfect mechanism, the most exquisite balance and arrangement of parts, everything fitted for its place, and a place also for everything, so that divine wisdom is strikingly made manifest. And this thing that we call science is simply a knowledge of the forces and principles with which nature abounds; and the more perfectly these forces and principles are understood, in just the same proportion are the highest results secured. The psalmist only expressed what every great teacher and philosopher has since declared, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches." You cannot turn your thought upon anything, no matter how minute or seemingly valueless, in which we do not see the same infinite perfection. The blade of grass, the flower of the field, the ear of corn, the snowflake whirling in the air, the dewdrop sparkling in the morning light, the fish that glide through the trackless sea, the birds that swim through the upper deep, the palm tree of the desert, the mote that dances in the sunbeam, or the mighty stars that move in their wondrous circles, all show forth the wisdom of our God. The play and interplay, the relation and combination, the harmony of poise and counterpoise, make everything around us a study and delight, and reveal such depths of wisdom as fill us with amazement.

There is something in the presence of even earthly wisdom which subdues and hushes and which makes the thoughtless and the flippant for the time being quiet and reverent. We feel this when we are ushered into the company of some great teacher or philosopher; the trifling words die away in silence, the frivolous and empty looks are exchanged for those of seriousness and concern, and we instinctively realize that the airy bubbles of common speech would here be sadly out of place. Who can go into some noble library, where uncounted volumes rest quietly on their shelves, without being instantly hushed and feel, to some extent, as though the place on which they stand is holy ground? But when we compare the wisdom of man with that of God, how utterly inadequate are all our terms and standards of measurement! For the wisest man in reality knows nothing; and the wiser he is the more perfectly he realizes his own absolute ignorance. Our highest knowledge is only in part. Of everything it may truly be said that "we see through a glass darkly." There is no one thing that we know perfectly. We may have the use of all our senses, and the play of our own faculties, and the advantage of all the schools; but when it comes to a complete knowledge of anything, we are utterly baffled. God only possesses wisdom; anything that we have is but the spray flung up by the infinite waves of His knowledge and being. Surely, then, we must hallow His name. In the presence of a wisdom that makes the earth a wonder, and the heavens a delight, are we not indeed constrained to fervently breathe the prayer of our text, "Hallowed be Thy name."

His name means HOLINESS. We do well to give

thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness, for it is to this that we owe everything we have, and everything we enjoy. If God were not holy ; if He were not infinitely and eternally just ; if principles of absolute rectitude did not prevail in His kingdom and government ; if there was any way in which He could be swerved from His course ; if the same motives and purposes could enter into His plans as with the kings of the earth, how fearful would be the condition of all created beings ! For being possessed of infinite power, and infinite wisdom, and having all of the resources of eternity at His control, how easily He could bring to pass the most malevolent designs, and cause everywhere dire confusion. But when we see the order and regularity with which our world is governed, we need no proof or statement from the Scriptures to assure us of the holiness of God. For who but a Being of infinite holiness could control such a world as this ? Here where passion rages, where strife abounds, where ambitions clash, where sin prevails ; where men and nations rise up one against the other ; where selfishness and greed and avarice struggle for the mastery ; where anger and hatred and revenge manifest themselves continually ; where for thousands of years there have been unnumbered forms and combinations of evil, had there been any but a holy and a righteous God to hold man and sin in check, this world with all its wealth of creative glory, all its magnificence of divine wisdom would have been worse than the deepest and most dreadful hell that priest or poet ever imagined. But because God is holy, because He cannot lie nor change, nor suffer any whim or caprice, nor be moved by

passion or anger, but calmly maintains His government, therefore this world is working its way out of sin and rebellion and is coming up into righteousness and peace. O how much comfort is brought to the soul when we remember that in the God whom we adore there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning; that He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; that no shadow of sin can ever fall upon His soul, no unholy passion ever sway or influence Him; that His character in everything that pertains to integrity, honor, justice, truth, impartiality, is infinitely and eternally perfect! Well indeed may we say, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord? who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" To bless and praise the name of our God is indeed a great joy, and from our deepest souls we cry, "Hallowed be Thy name."

His name means MERCY. How many times are we told in the Scriptures that "His mercy endureth forever;" and as though this were not enough, we have the marvelous experience in the life of Moses—"And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." And without this attribute of mercy in the divine Being we would be but dust and ashes in His presence. For we have sinned, sinned deeply, shamefully, ungratefully, sinned so that from the crown of our head to the sole of our foot we are covered with "wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores;" sinned so that every day is blotted and blurred with the weaknesses

and failures of which we have been guilty. We have sinned against light, against conscience, against truth and honor and righteousness. We have sinned against our neighbors, against the community, against the church, against ourselves. We have trampled God's laws under our feet, we have neglected His word, deserted His house, profaned His day, and in spirit violated every one of His holy commands. O how fearfully we have sinned! And how fearfully the world has sinned! For these thousands of years it has reveled and wallowed in sin, until even the saints from under the throne have cried, "O Lord, how long?" But the Lord is very merciful, infinitely merciful, and has a pity in His heart that outreaches human understanding. And so he allows this world to go on, sending it light, and help, and grace, and comfort, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and ready at the cry of the most helpless and wretched penitent to have mercy upon him and pardon him. Can we forbear, then, from reverencing such a name as this? If we have any gratitude, if we have anything of honor or gratefulness, if we have anything of principle or affection, we cannot but repeat, and repeat with profound thankfulness, "Hallowed be Thy name."

His name means REDEMPTION. There is, and indeed there ever has been, a general tendency to associate the work of redemption with the life and sacrifice of Jesus, and to look upon God more in the character of a stern and inflexible judge whose justice in some way must be satisfied. But this view of the great plan of atonement is lamentably deficient, for it seems to put the Father and the Son at variance;

it represents Jesus as being more merciful than God, and it gives the idea of a lack of harmony in the thoughts and purposes of the Deity. We do well then to turn our thought to those names of God which mean redemption, and to read such a passage as that which declares that "Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." The common idea of the incarnation is that it was a necessity into which God was driven by the continued wickedness of the world, and was only accepted by Him when all other means had failed. But this implies a reluctance on the part of God, an unwillingness to help and save a lost world, whereas the very opposite is true; and no one can read the Bible with any degree of intelligence who will not perceive, on almost every page, God's intense desire to bring about human salvation. And when at length God saw that there was no eye to pity and no arm to save, in some sublime, glorious, mysterious way He came Himself, and He came, not because He was forced to come, but because He so loved His children that rather than that any should perish He would suffer in their stead. The mystery of the universe is not in its creation but in its redemption, a redemption which involved the eternal and ever blessed God leaving the throne of His glory, and assuming in Himself our mortal flesh. There is something so magnificent in the thought that God the Lord of earth and sky is our Redeemer that the very mention of it is almost beyond belief. O, why is it that we are so slow of heart to believe in the Gospel of a divine salvation? Why are our eyes so holden that we cannot see the magnitude and the grandeur of a redemp-

tion in which God was manifest in the flesh that He might in this way redeem a guilty world? And is there anything more fearful within the possibility of man than the way in which we have treated this wondrous Gospel? Of all names should we not hallow the name of our Redeemer—the great God who in His own body suffered for us on the accursed tree? O let us call upon our souls and all that is within us to bless and magnify His holy name!

Then hallowed be Thy name, Thou God of infinite power, and wisdom, and holiness, and mercy; and still more gratefully may Thy name, be hallowed when we remember that it is the name of our Saviour and Redeemer by whose mercy and grace we are saved from our sins and redeemed unto everlasting life! And now, if this is how you think of God, there will be no need to caution you against any light or trifling use of His name, for that name will be to you the name above every name; it will be the name upon which your soul will dwell with deepest and most sacred joy; and which in your heart will be sanctified and hallowed as its most divine and priceless possession. It will be hallowed in your thoughts, in your words, in your character, in your life. Under the inspiration of that mighty name you will rest with unspeakable comfort and delight, and the very name of God to you will be so hallowed that you will only breathe it in holy prayer and praise.

“And the seventh angel sounded ; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ ; and he shall reign forever and ever.”—
Rev. xi, 15.

III.

“Thy kingdom come.”

IT seems incredible that nature could so arrange its laws and harmonize its forces, that the energies of a sunbeam, or the possibilities of a dewdrop, should reach almost to the infinite. And yet this is what science teaches, and not only teaches, but actually demonstrates. There was a time when strength was a question of size, and power a matter of weight, and things gigantic held sway in human thought. But we are wiser now, for instead of depending upon any one force or principle, we bring about unions and combinations, and scientifically it is marvelously true, that where formerly one could chase a thousand, now two can put ten thousand to flight. Everything depends upon its relation to something else. Coal, when properly related to water, means a force that will send the mighty vessel through the trackless sea in the face of the wildest storm, or set ten thousand wheels in motion with a power infinitely greater than that of any fabled giant. A piece of carbon, properly related to an electric wire, transforms the night into day, and the awful darkness which once fell upon man is now no longer possible. Everything has its relations, and when these relationships are formed and applied instantly there are the most amazing results. Things once valueless, waste, débris, seemingly as salt without savor, “good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men,” are now, by

their relation to other things, of the highest worth and importance, and contribute very largely to the comfort and strength of the world.

Now this principle obtains spiritually, and in this prayer we have a divine illustration of how it is applied. Here was Jesus talking to a little company of men, poor men, obscure men, men to whom life in itself was a worthless, pitiful thing; for what did it mean but a few years of grinding poverty, a hopeless fight with weakness and pain, and then a wretched burial in some Potter's Field. But you see how Jesus takes the human life and unites it with the divine life; how He lifts this world in His mighty hand and joins it to the world above; how He brings humanity into personal and immediate contact with Deity, and thus makes earth and heaven one in purpose and character. This prayer when properly understood is more than a series of petitions; it is a mighty chain which holds our world within the circle of the divine control, and makes possible for every life, not only the sovereignty, but the glory and beauty and fellowship of things holy and spiritual. The very fact that God's kingdom may come on this earth means that even in this world there are almost infinite possibilities of truth and honor and righteousness. Once the natural attains its true relations to the spiritual, though the feet of man still rest upon the earth, yet his head reaches to the stars and his whole being throbs with divinity.

In the gospels the terms "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" are used interchangeably and quite frequently. And there are few words which are possessed of such fullness of meaning as "kingdom." On the part of the monarch, it means govern-

ment, rule, dominion, sovereignty ; on the part of the people, it means loyalty, order, submission, obedience. It includes both the act of government and the territory over which that government extends, and as used by Christ implied infinite sovereignty on the part of God and grateful recognition on the part of His people.

But now what is this kingdom ?

1. *It is not a kingdom of force.* And in this respect it differs from all earthly kingdoms, for what are the kingdoms of this world but forces massed and controlled by still other forces ? How does it come that England is possessed of such amazing influence in the world, so that the words spoken in Westminster are heard in all parts of the earth ? Go out to Woolwich, where the national arsenal is located, and see those prodigious furnaces in full blast night and day ; where thousands of men are employed all the year manufacturing cannon and weapons of every description. Then go down to Portsmouth and see the mighty docks and navy yards which are there maintained, and though England more than any other nation in Europe is the land of Bibles and churches, still the British empire is one of force. How is it that Germany has obtained such sway in the councils of state and government, and at this moment holds the balance of power on the European continent ? If you visit almost any of the chief towns in the German empire you will see the thousands and tens of thousands of men who form a part of the most gigantic army of modern times, and in this mighty host of trained soldiers you can realize why Germany is so powerful both at home and abroad. And what applies to Eng-

land and Germany applies to all other nations. They are nothing but kingdoms of force dominated by the rifle, the bayonet, the warship, and the moment this force is withdrawn the nation falls to pieces.

But the kingdom for which Christ prayed, and for which He taught His disciples to pray, is not of this character; for God will maintain no standing army, He will build no mighty ironclads, He will lead no destroying host. His kingdom must be of a very different order; for if He should elect to govern by force, the flash of His sword and the roll of His thunder would fill the earth with dread and fear. What could we do against Him who "taketh up the isles as a very little thing," who holdeth the storms and the seas in the hollow of His hand, to whom "the nations are as a drop of a bucket;" who weigheth "the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" What would our armies be against Him who "stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain," who comprehendeth "the dust of the earth in a measure;" who "bringeth the princes to nothing," and "maketh the judges of the earth as vanity?" No! The kingdom here spoken of is not of force, for had it been so, how easily God could have brought it to pass.

Nor is it a kingdom of pomp and display. When one of the kings of Spain was protesting against some service that court observance put upon him, he made the remark, "Why need I do this thing, it is nothing but a ceremony?" whereupon his prime minister answered, "Very true, but the king himself is nothing but a ceremony." And in almost every instance this is the case; for what are kings and courts but displays of pomp and ceremony, of no real value to the

nation. But so strongly have the ideas of kingly grandeur and splendor taken possession of the public mind that rulers must live in the midst of the most lavish wealth and display. Hence their regal palaces, their immense households, their state journeys to and fro; hence their thrones and diadems, their titles and dignities.

But the kingdom spoken of in our text is in every way the opposite of this, for Christ says that it "cometh not with observation;" that is, with outward show or pretense. At one time He likens it to a grain of mustard seed, then again to leaven hid in the meal, and again to grain buried in the earth. Here we have the distinct contrasts of ostentation and display. For surely God has no need to affect pomp or circumstance on this world. Did he not speak it from its hiding place? Was it not His voice that called it into being? When "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep," did not He give character to the shapeless mass and open the curtains of the night? And what are our mimic courts and petty kingdoms as compared with Him "whose throne is in the heavens," who "inhabith eternity," whose "kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and" whose "dominion endureth throughout all generations?" Pasteboard and tinsel, stucco and spangles our mightiest empires are in the sight of Him who is "the King eternal, immortal, invisible."

But to come still closer to our theme, and to apprehend more fully the nature of the kingdom for which we are to pray, we observe that *it is a spiritual kingdom*. Now, what is a spiritual kingdom, and in what sense is it superior to a temporal kingdom? This

word "spiritual" is one that we often use. Indeed, it is one of the most familiar terms in Christian nomenclature. We speak of some men as being spiritual men, and of some churches as being spiritual churches, in contradistinction to others of a certain character. But what do we mean by such comparisons and distinctions? Just this: That the spiritual element predominates; that the man or the church is not governed by carnal or worldly desires; that the higher, the purer, the diviner qualities have the preeminence; and that the life is derived not from the baser substances that lie about the roots, but from the nobler and richer altitudes where the soul habitually dwells. Hence the man of prayer, the man of thought, the man of divine contemplation is a spiritual man; he lives "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And in living "after the Spirit" the man becomes divine, God-like, for "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." So then when we speak of this kingdom as a spiritual kingdom, we mean that it is one in which the divine attributes will have the preeminence in our affections and thoughts, and in which God will be made manifest in character and life.

Would it not be well to pause here and ask ourselves if we really desire this kingdom to come? For as we have offered this prayer have we not imagined that it meant the pomp and circumstance of government; the display of divine energy and force; the overthrow of systems that were oppressive and brutal; and as we have looked around us and seen the world writhing in struggle and contending with sin and wrong, most fervently have we breathed the words of

our text and looked for the coming of God's kingdom on the earth. But as we study these words more carefully, and see that they mean the overthrow of passion, the destruction of lust, the casting out of unholy ambition, the trampling upon pride, the transformation of life and character, the upbuilding of that which is purely spiritual, the upward growth of the soul, and that, in fact, it has no reference to outside and material things, but only concerns ourselves, are we quite sure that we are anxious for this kingdom to come? For it is one thing to pray that God would set up a government on the earth; that He would establish His throne amid august and divine splendor; that His kingdom would be of universal sway, and that all nations would hasten to do Him reverence; but it is quite a different thing to pray that He would set up that kingdom in our hearts; that He might be Lord and Sovereign of our every thought; that our lives would be controlled and dominated by His grace; that our desires, our ambitions, our hopes, our plans, our prospects, our tempers, our homes, our whole being, in short, would be under the guidance of His will, and that He would work in us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure?"

Are we positively certain that we want this kingdom to come? This kingdom of a divine spiritual life, when the flesh with all its lusts and appetites will be crucified with Christ, and when even in our body we shall bear the marks of the Lord Jesus. And yet this is the real kingdom, for "the kingdom of God is within you."

Again, this being a spiritual kingdom, the principles that operate in spiritual life must control and

govern. It is a rule of world-wide application that government to be successful must be harmonious. There must be no class legislation, not one law for the rich and another for the poor; no unjust discrimination, not one part of the nation favored at the expense of another. Justice, to be properly administered, must be blind, the scales should hold on an even balance, and the highest laws are Godlike in the sense that they are no respecters of persons. Even the ruling monarch must accept the charter under which the nation is governed, and while he may have certain prerogatives and privileges, yet these must not conflict with the principles of national justice. It was for a violation of these principles that Charles of England and Louis of France were beheaded, and one of our own presidents was impeached. Such a course unrebuked would throw the strongest nation into confusion and endanger all national government. There must be harmony between the sovereign and the subject, between the palace and the home; the constitution upon which the nation rests must be one both in spirit and operation.

Now, what are the principles that underlie all spiritual government as revealed in the Scriptures? Are they not these: Absolute rectitude, perfect righteousness, divine holiness, impartial justice? Take any part of this revelation, the Old Testament or the New, the Pentateuch or the Apocalypse, the prophets or the gospels, and these principles are everywhere visible. We cannot but discover the essential unity of the Scriptures whether we read the history of the patriarchs or the Acts of the Apostles. The laws of God have never varied in any nation or

age since the world began. Christ distinctly stated that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. All that He did was to deepen, spiritualize, illustrate, and apply the dispensation of Moses and the prophets; and the sermon on the mount only put in fresher and more concrete form truths which had been in the world throughout all generations. In all the centuries that lay between the giving of the law on Sinai and the advent of Christ there was no change or variation in the divine government. The same principles always prevailed. The kingdom which God was anxious to consummate on the earth was ever spiritual, having for its basal principles righteousness, justice, holiness, rectitude.

And now, my dear people, in all seriousness, are we ready for the advent of such a kingdom as this? Are we willing that these great principles should guide and govern our lives? Are we prepared to have our business and all our relations with each other conducted on the plan suggested here? The prayer of our text is a very serious one. It means a new departure for many of us. It means a radical change in most of our purposes and plans. It means a transformation in the whole world of commerce and trade, such as the wildest Utopian has not dared to imagine. It means "judgment . . . to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." It means an honesty clear as the light, and an integrity which nothing can gainsay. It means a truthfulness without a flaw, and a character clear as crystal. It means fair play on the part of the master, and fair play on the part of the man. It means a readjustment of the social problems of the day, and the inauguration of a new order of things. For, think

you, under the rule of the new kingdom that men in thousands would be out of employment, and mills and factories would be standing idle? Or that thousands would be rioting and reveling in wealth, while tens of thousands would be hungry and destitute? The new kingdom would make impossible such conditions as those which prevail all about us, and would bring about a revolution so radical and sweeping that our thought fairly staggers at its contemplation. Are we ready, then, to pray for this kingdom to come when we know that with its coming the whole course and movement of our lives must be materially affected by it?

But is this kingdom coming? Yes, most assuredly. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness." His word never fails. We may have thought that the wheels of His chariot are delayed, and that His movements are slow; but one day with him is "as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." With him there is no need of haste. He inhabiteth eternity. Plans and purposes such as His require millenniums to develop. He waited four thousand years for the fullness of time before He sent His Son, and with Him there is no weariness or fainting. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law." Some time, just when no man knoweth, but some time surely, the angel chorus will sound from the sky: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever."

“He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment
in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law.”—Isa. xlii, 4.

IV.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

IN one of the churches in Rome there is a staircase which the Italians regard with special veneration and sanctity. According to tradition this staircase was in the palace of Pontius Pilate, and upon it our Saviour walked on that last day of His earthly ministry. No one is allowed to set foot upon these marble steps, and only kneeling penitents are permitted to ascend the sacred stairway. And, as though this were not enough, it is required that as each step is reached a special prayer be offered, a special confession be made, a special vow be registered, and the penance increases in merit and efficacy just as each step is valued and recognized. In this way the holy staircase becomes something more than a mere flight of stairs, it is rather a succession of steps, each one marked by special devotion and consecrated by special prayer.

Now, just as the Italian penitent uses the holy staircase, pausing and praying upon each step, so should we use the prayer which Christ gave to His disciples. For this prayer is not one to be offered hastily. It is the deepest, the loftiest, the most comprehensive, the most heart-searching of which a human soul is capable, and when we can say the Lord's Prayer with an understanding of its purpose and meaning, life will have a richness and beauty of which few of us dare even to dream.

For example take the words of our text and upon

this step of the holy staircase let us pause and pray, that we may learn what this petition really means.

There is a certain sense in which God's will is being done on the earth; for it is by the will of God that the harvests ripen in the sun, that the fruits blush and mellow in the orchards, and that our barns and storehouses are crowded with the produce of the field. It is by the will of God that the sun pours out its warmth and brightness upon the world, that rich and tempering breezes fill the sky, that sweet and refreshing rains fall from heaven, and that everything grows after its kind. It is by the will of God that the flowers open to the morning light, that the birds twitter and chirrup on the housetop, that the young lambs sport in the meadows, and that the trees of the field clap their hands. It is by the will of God that the ocean heaves in sublime grandeur, that the thunders crash in the darkened heavens, that the storms rage and beat in the sky, and the very foundations of the earth are shaken. All these things are the result of God's will; for what is His will but that divine energy in which everything lives and moves and has its being.

And so also God's will is being done in the history and government of nations. True, we have our princes and rulers and monarchs, yet God is the universal Sovereign. He is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords," and to Him every throne is in vassalage. We cannot always see the outlines of His plans, nor fathom the mystery of His purposes, but we are indeed poor students of history if we fail to recognize His interference and control in the nations of the earth. A few flakes of

snow from His hand defeated the mighty ambitions of Napoleon, and the powerful army that was to conquer Russia was driven back in utter desolation. A few drops of rain from His fingers decided the struggle at Waterloo, and made necessary a new map of the continent of Europe. One breath from His nostrils dashed the Spanish Armada against the pitiless rocks and established forever the supremacy of Protestantism. Yes, God's will is being done. Behind the council chairs of state, above the cabals and cabinets of statesmen, over the shock of contending armies, beyond the sway of king and emperor, His power and dominion are working out their gracious designs.

And then, too, in the providence which governs and controls every life God's will is being done. For did He not create us? Did He not order our birth and parentage? Does not His breath fill our nostrils? Are we not everywhere under his dominion? Our blessings of health, of strength, of activity; our brain power, our mental energies, our abilities of body and spirit, have all come from Him. And He is at work in every part of our life. Nothing escapes His eye; nothing is too small for His notice; nothing is too great for His power. How striking are the words of the psalmist: "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. . . . Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me."

And now, if God's will is being done in nature, and

the whole earth is subject to His control ; if His will is being done in the nations, and every throne and kingdom is at His command ; if His will is being done in human life, and every soul is the creature of His power, what need is there for the prayer of the text ? But the text itself answers the question, for the prayer is not simply that God's will be done, but that it is to be "done in earth, *as it is in heaven.*"

As we look up to the heaven that is within range of human sight, and try to discover how God's will is being done there, what do we learn ? When we turn our mighty telescopes to the skies and reach out into distances which are almost infinite, finding stars and suns and systems of countless number, what is the one thought which invariably impresses us ? And though the size and grandeur of the heavenly bodies seem so vast and wonderful that our poor thought is lost in the midst of such magnificence and power, yet we cannot but realize everywhere the harmony, the order, the serenity, the faithfulness, the unchangeableness which are revealed. Because the polar star is ever in its sphere, following with implicit obedience the course which God ordained, our sailors are able to cross the trackless seas, led by that light with which there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. Because the planets move in circles which are divinely perfect, we can measure to the instant the time of their appearing, and the moment that they shall set. Because the moon is as regular in its stately march as the heartbeats of infinity, we can tell months in advance when she attains meridian or accomplishes an eclipse. Even the comets, wayward and eccentric as they seem to be, are moving in their order, and we

can predict with absolute accuracy their advent to our sky. We see, then, in this heaven how God's will is being done—with a faithfulness that never varies, with a constancy that knows no break, with a steadiness which nothing can jar, with a harmony that is as beautiful as it is divine, with a fidelity that continues throughout all generations, the skies and the stars are doing the will of God.

And what are the agencies by which all this is accomplished? Does God grasp each star with a hand that is almighty and despotic, and compel its movement through its appointed orbit? No! but by what we call the law of attraction, or, to give it a better and more expressive name—the law of divine affection—each star goes out in love to some other star; upon that star it lavishes the wealth of its light and warmth, thus holding it forever in its place, and so the mighty universe in vast and wondrous circles moves around the throne of Him whose name is Light, whose name is Love, and whose tender mercies are over all His works.

And if we ascend to the other heaven, that heaven which we cannot see and which no telescope can reveal, but of which we have glimpses in the Scriptures, how is God's will being done there? Take the visit of every angel that is recorded in either the Old Testament or the New; note carefully the circumstances, mark the errands upon which these angels were sent, and in every instance you will find that implicit faith, unfaltering obedience, intense consuming zeal, were most strikingly displayed. And mark you in some of these visits their faith must have been tried far beyond that of mortal endurance. What must have

been the horror of those angels as they beheld the shame and degradation of the cities of the plain? If an oath causes us to shudder, and a foul word makes our blood fairly chill, how much more with the angels of God? Think you that it was no test to an angel's faith to be sent to the relief of God's prophet, and yet for twenty days to be hindered by the presence and power of the evil one? When the angels came to the wilderness and found Jesus weary and exhausted after His mysterious and awful conflict, must they not have looked on in profound wonder and amazement? And how must that angel have felt to whom was given the sight of a Saviour praying in such agony and earnestness that drops like as of blood stood upon His brow? But no matter what was the errand or the circumstance, we find invariably obedience, faith, fidelity, perfect submission to the will of God. And if we will only think of the names by which these divine messengers are called, we will find still further proof of how they do God's will, for they are called cherubim, seraphim—cherubim meaning that which is held fast, expression of loyalty, faithfulness, service; while seraphim means a flame of fire, burning zeal, consuming ardor. So then God's will is done in heaven with an obedience that never falters, with a faith that never weakens, with a zeal that never languishes, with a love that never questions, and it is because His will is thus obeyed that heaven is what it is.

Now it is this that we are to pray for; when God's will on earth will be done with the same implicitness, the same willingness, the same eagerness, as it is done in heaven. Nor can there be any peace or harmony until this prayer be answered. If there are two wills

in an army—the will of the one who is placed in command, and the will of the army itself—unless these wills blend there will be nothing but trouble and confusion. If there are two wills on a ship—the will of the captain to whom has been given the responsibility, and the will of the crew—what can there be but mishap and disaster? If there are two wills in a mill or factory—the will of the owner, and that of the workman—nothing can save the establishment from ruin. If there are two wills in a home—that of the parents, and that of the children—such a home must in the very nature of things be restless and discordant. If there are two wills in a school—that of the teacher, and that of the pupils—it is useless to look for either education or training. In all of our earthly relations, in order to insure government, success, prosperity, peace, the will of the one who is placed in authority must be recognized and obeyed. But if such recognition and obedience are obtained simply by force, and exacted under penalty, nothing is gained except the discipline of a prison or the rigid regulations of an army. Here, then, is the problem—how to bring the two wills into perfect harmony, so that there will be the order, the obedience, the regularity of faithful service, and yet at the same time the freedom, the gladness, the delight and joy of perfect liberty. And that is the problem to which God has bent His energies for the last six thousand years. He could easily have governed this world by power, by might, by authority; but that would have made the earth one vast prison house, where obedience would have been enforced, as we enforce it from those who are under our control. And so God has waited. He has

allowed men to rebel, to go into sin, to violate His commands, to profane His name, to make light of His authority; in short, He has permitted this world to riot and revel in wickedness rather than force an unwilling obedience, or compel a reluctant heart to do His will.

The Christian soul is often deeply distressed by what it sees and feels. It sees ungodliness flaunt itself, dishonesty prosper, corruption worm its way into the very heart of life; it sees the good man suffer disaster, the pure heart crushed, the helpless and the innocent trampled upon as with iron heels; it sees men defy every law of God, and for the sake of applause, or gain, violate the most sacred rights; it sees the drunkard reeling home from his debauch, destitute of every sense and more degraded than the beasts of the field; it sees, O! how much that is sickening and distressing, and the question of the psalmist comes oft and again to the heart, "Doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" But God does know, He knows all about it, and He knows a thousandfold more than we can ever know, but He will not interfere by force, nor compel obedience by authority, nor rule by the exercise of mere power. God's plan for this world is that the same principles that prevail in heaven among the angels shall prevail on earth among men, and that obedience here will be as free, as grateful, and as joyous as it is in paradise.

And what a new conception this gives us of the Christian faith, and of God's purpose in our redemption! Most of us, indeed people generally, have the idea that religion is restrictive; that it interferes with

our rights and enjoyments ; that it puts its disciples under a yoke ; and that the more religious a life is the more austere and ascetic and limited it is. But from our text the very opposite would seem to be the case, for are we not told that in God's "presence is fullness of joy, and that at" His "right hand there are pleasures for evermore," and His thought is to bring down to earth the same sweet, gracious, blissful conditions which prevail in heaven ? A religious life is not a serfdom, a bondage, a hard restrictive thing. How could it be ? for it brings the soul into harmony with God, it establishes relationships with that which is holy and divine, and it makes possible to the heart a consciousness of peace and rest infinitely beyond anything that this world can give.

And why not ? For God's will rests upon absolute knowledge. If He denies or withholds anything to-day, it is because He can see to-morrow. His purposes for us cover the whole life, and whereas we are bemoaning a misplaced brick or an uneven stone, He is planning for the whole cathedral.

With that knowledge is associated infinite care. We are reckless because we are thoughtless and selfish, and consider chiefly our own interests, but God's will takes in everything that is involved. In certain bridges one stone cannot be taken out without endangering the whole structure. So it is in life. There are many things which we ask for, ask to be given, ask to have removed, and we wonder why our prayer is unanswered ; but we cannot see how these things are related to other things, how our interests involve other interests, and what to us is seemingly a small affair is really the keystone of some bridge, and

upon it almost everything depends. But God understands the whole plan and purpose and arranges for it with infinite care.

And, then, with that care is eternal love. God's will all along rests upon this. It was love that prompted the creation of our world, love that led to its redemption, and the love of God for His children is as eternal and infinite as His own being.

And now, if God's will rests upon absolute knowledge, infinite care, eternal love, and is maintained by almighty power, surely there is no wiser prayer possible for human lips than that of our text. Then let us offer this prayer with deeper earnestness and more perfect faith than we have ever done before, and may we gladly and earnestly try to do that will "as it is done in heaven."

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever : and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”—John vi, 51.

V.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

A YOUNG man, ambitious to become a profound musician, and who for years had devoted himself to the study of harmony and the works of the great composers, until he imagined that he had well-nigh mastered his profession, went to a famous teacher to receive a few words of final instruction. With not a little pride did he make mention of the various schools in which he had been a student, and of his general knowledge of musical science. It was therefore with surprise and pain that he heard the teacher tell him to return to his home and for a given time study the scales. And even when that time had expired the same words fell upon his wondering ears. But at length there came a day when his teacher said to him, "Now you know the scales, and now you know music, and the world is waiting for you."

And so with this prayer which we can all repeat, but which few, if indeed any of us, really know. It is very easy to say it. Nothing is easier, and for a person not to be familiar with the Lord's Prayer betrays an ignorance that is almost pagan; but to know this prayer, to know it thoroughly, to be able to take each petition with a full understanding of its meaning and offer it faithfully and intelligently before God, is a condition of spiritual life and experience to which very few attain.

Look, for instance, at the prayer of our text. Like

a rare and wondrous diamond cut by a master hand, until every point and angle has a brilliance all its own, and each facet seems as an avenue of light leading to the mysterious fire which glows and burns within, so each word of this sublime petition has its own value and meaning and power, until that which at the first seemed as simple as the lisping of a child opens into archways of such fullness and beauty as lead us into the immediate presence of God.

“Give us”—Our bread, then, is a gift. And yet we talk of independence. We speak somewhat proudly of earning our living. We say, quite frequently, that we are entitled to the labor of our hands, and that the one who works has a right to eat. But admitting all this, if we take time to think do we not see that God is the giver, not only of life, but of bread, and that if He were to withhold His hand we would all perish. True, the blacksmith labors at his anvil and the carpenter at his bench ; the miner delves for coal or iron, and the mechanic brings forth the trophies of his craft ; the sailor carries our products far across the sea, and the engineer leads long trains from ocean to ocean ; the anxious merchant makes his purchases in every land, and the manufacturer competes with all energy of hand and brain ; but actual, positive bread is not in any one of these things, and in point of fact there is not a man on the face of the earth who really earns his bread, or who is in the least degree independent. The farmer may plow the land, put in the seed, watch over the tender grain, cut it down when it is ripe, thresh it in the machine, send it to the mill, and from thence it may go out to bless and help the world ; but so far as having made his daily bread is

concerned, the farmer has done no more than the man who paints the side of a house, or the man who digs in the street. We are just as dependent for our bread to-day as the children of Israel were in the desert, and the daily miracle which fed them is in no wise different from the daily miracle by which we are fed. We are prone to dwell upon the greatness of that wonder when bread fell from heaven, but in point of fact it is no greater wonder to have bread fall from heaven than to have it spring up out of the ground. Indeed, of the two it seems easier to have the skies open; and the miracle of the harvest, when thoughtfully considered, is far more vast and mysterious than that of the wilderness. But because the one is repeated every year; because we are permitted in a divine, gracious way to be workers together with God; because we have the evidence of our senses, and there is no direct appeal to our imagination; because the growth is gradual, so that we can watch the process from one stage to another; and because the laws of nature are so harmoniously ordered that we can rest upon them with unwavering trust, we therefore conclude that it is by our own efforts that our daily bread is procured. Imagine, if you will, a vast factory, where there are floors and rooms and lofts filled with all kinds of machinery, and where almost every manner of work is carried on. Shafting runs along the walls on either side, belts are carried from drums to pulleys, giving to each machine all the power it can use, and for uncounted years that power has never varied. The massive, mighty engine which supplies all this energy is a marvel of beauty and strength, and so perfect are its movements, and so uniform its stroke,

that neither noise is heard nor jar is felt. And now can you imagine those workmen, because they cannot hear the throb of the mighty piston, nor feel the tremblings of the ponderous wheel, try to persuade themselves that there is no engine at all, and that each machine has its power in itself! How soon they would awake from their folly if that engine should stop! And how silent and empty that factory would be! So exactly with our world. God's great forces move so noiselessly, and perform their work with such infinite perfection and ease, that no jar or movement is ever felt; but should they be suspended for even one season, hunger, famine, starvation, death, would crowd the whole earth. We do well, then, to pray to God for bread, for none but God has bread to give.

"Give us . . . our"—Each one has then a portion, and with that portion each one should be content. With what emphasis is this taught as we refer to the manna of the wilderness, for there we see that each man was to gather according to his eating, to the number of his household, and to them which were in his tents. But the spirits of greed and avarice manifested themselves even in the desert, and some took more than their portion and hid it away against the morrow. On the morrow, however, they found that their selfish treasures availed them nothing, for the manna bred worms and had to be cast out. O what a parable this is! What wondrous lessons it was designed to teach! And what a different world this would be if we could only see just what God intended! Is there anything more pitiable, more demoralizing, more cruel than the awful struggle of the world for bread? The unhealthy competitions, the dishonest rivalries, the

tyrannies of capital, the resentment of labor, the cruelties of trade, the underselling, the underbuying, the forced dividends, the reduced wages, the questionable expedients, the unscrupulous designs which enter so largely into business life, are all involved in this matter of bread, and it is possible that the problem of bread was never more vexed or complicated than at this present hour. And bread has ever been the cause of conflict and disturbance. We read of mobs marching through the streets of London, of Paris, of New York, demanding bread, and so fierce and angry have been these demands that revolutions have been precipitated, and blood and death, like black waves crested in crimson, have swept over the nation. But the deeper hunger and the more fearful poverty march not in processions, nor unfurl their banners in the glare of the city's light. In silence, in pride, in an agony of shame, all the more terrible because it will not reveal itself, thousands upon thousands suffer the dread pangs of hunger, and behind many a quiet, uncomplaining face, did we but know it, there is positive starvation. What fearful chapters of woe are being written in every great city on the face of the earth! The pinched features, the hollow eye, the sunken cheek, the impoverished blood, the wail of the hungry child, the mother's agony, the father's despair, the hopeless struggle, and then, thank God! the peace and quiet of the grave. Within sound of our church bells, under the very shadows of our sanctuaries, men and women in scores and hundreds and thousands are in the direst extremity, and the question of all others that engages their anxious and continued thought is that of bread. And even where actual hunger is not

present, how persistent and pressing this bread question ever is! How it writes its deep and abiding lines on the brow of the merchant, on the face of the workman, on the countenance of nearly everyone! How it whitens the hair, stoops the form, weakens the limb, and robs the whole body of its strength! What sleepless hours it causes, what sad and anxious thoughts, what burdens it imposes, what sorrow it brings! That famous statue of Laocoon, with his sons, struggling in the folds of the awful serpents, but faintly types the writhing agony of the world in its hunger for bread, and the bitter, agonizing cry of despairing thousands but ill accords with the songs of the angels. Just as the Danube flows through the very heart of Europe, and pours itself into the Black Sea by its three mighty mouths, so the great stream of care and anxiety courses through the very heart of humanity, and by the three mouths of "What shall I eat?" "What shall I drink?" "Wherewithal shall I be clothed?" pours itself in the Black Sea of misery and despair.

But why is this? Has God more children than He can feed? Is His larder not large enough and full enough to meet the wants of His family? No! a thousand times No! If there is hunger anywhere God is not to blame, for He has made the most ample provision for the wants of everyone, and in His house there is "bread enough and to spare." But we are to blame; for we are not content with our portion, but demand as well the portion of some one else; and because we can insist upon that demand by the force of larger brain power, stronger social conditions, greater strength, a more favorable environ-

ment, others are made to hunger through our greed and avarice. What necessity is there for the strife that we see all about us? None whatever. It is brutal, it is inhuman, it is devilish. O, how the Scriptures ring out against this greed and selfishness of men! How solemn are its warnings! How earnest and appealing are its teachings!

But what a comfort it is to turn from all this strife and confusion, and bring to our souls the peace and content which our text makes possible. Some of you can remember the heat and glare and noise and confusion of that great square in Milan, in which stands the famous cathedral. Overhead the burning sun, underfoot the burning pavements; the air is laden with sounds and noises, varied and bewildering, from the rumble of heavy wheels, to the piteous cries of the crowd of beggars who refuse to be refused; and then you remember the grateful contrast, as the thick leathern curtain of the cathedral door was drawn aside, and you stood hushed and solemn in the glory and grandeur of that wondrous edifice. How delicious the quiet, how grateful the peace, how perfect the rest!

And just such a contrast is possible, when we think of the noise and clamor and turmoil and confusion of the world in its struggle for bread, and the peace and calm and content and rest which are brought to us by our text.

"Give us . . . our daily"—The bread, then, is not only portioned according to our needs, but according to our day. And this is the teaching of all Scripture. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "Take therefore no thought for the morrow." In

point of fact there is no to-morrow, for all our divisions of time are merely terms of convenience, and have no value other than temporary expedients. All that we have is to-day, hence the force and significance of this prayer. And yet, while we all concede that there is no certainty whatever with regard to the future; while we all acknowledge that our hold upon life is the most frail and precarious of anything that can be imagined; while we are all ready to admit that at any moment we may be called hence; and while every day almost we are startled at the abruptness with which life will be changed in all its bearings, nevertheless it is upon the future that most of us have our eyes fastened, and for that future most of our hopes and plans are centered. We are so anxious about the future that we are not able to enjoy the present. We think of the inevitable changes that must take place; of the declining health and strength, with all that this involves, of the time when we shall be dependent on the care of others; of the weaknesses and infirmities which the years must bring, and thus the future throws its unpleasant, anxious shadows upon the life and heart of almost everyone.

You ask men why they toil so, giving their time, their thought, their energy to business; so much so, that they are absorbed to the exclusion of nearly everything else. There are men who have no time to read their Bibles, no time for religious duties, no time for church work, no time for the claims of citizenship, no time even for their families, time only to make some provision against a future which they dread, lest it may find them in weakness and poverty.

Most assuredly the Bible encourages thrift and diligence and economy, but for what purpose? That the one may hoard and amass and lay up treasure for himself against the days to come? If so, then what mean the words of Jesus—"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth?" What mean the words of St. Paul, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare?" The awful sin of this generation is not pride, nor drunkenness, nor reveling, but an intense worldliness which manifests itself in greed, in selfishness, in avarice, until it would seem at times as though the corrupting, blighting influence of this unholy passion prevailed almost everywhere. And all for what? To provide bread for mouths which will never eat it; raiment for forms which will never wear it; shelter for bodies which will never need it; for the poor body will be sleeping in the grave, and that for which it spent itself will be in the hands of others. The plain fact is, we have no faith in God, no faith in His providence, no faith in His ability to take care of us, no faith in the promises which He has given, and so rather than trust in Him we will provide for our own future and get bread for ourselves. No faith in Him who called this world into being, and upholds it by His power! No faith in Him who for uncounted years has lavished His gifts upon men! No faith in Him whose love was so great that He gave His only Son! With what emphasis the apostle asks, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" What fearful hard work most of us make of living! The burdens we carry, the

pains we suffer, the pangs we endure, the distress, the anxiety, the woe, with which our hearts are crowded. We may not be scientific atheists, but we are atheists at heart, for we live as though there was no God in the heavens, or divine providence on the earth.

No greater change could possibly be imagined than that which would come upon this earth if the prayer of our text was only offered with intelligence and faith. Just as when the disciples aroused the sleeping Christ, and at the sound of His voice the angry winds died away in fear, and the mad seas like slaves fell prostrate at His feet; so the storm and rage and passion and envy and desire, which like waves and tempests sweep over the souls of men, would be hushed into a great calm, and this world would possess a peace, deep, gracious, divine, unspeakable, and full of glory.

"Bread"—And that word "bread" means everything. Some night when the sky is clear and the stars seem to hang low in the heavens, one brighter than all the others will attract your eye, and you look at it again and again. But when you take the telescope you find that that which at first appeared but a single star, in reality is a cluster, and a cluster not of stars merely, but of suns, each one with a radiance and glory all its own. So with this word "bread." At first it seems but a provision for our common wants, food for the body, sustenance for the flesh, supply for the physical demand; but when we see it as Christ saw it, when we understand it as God meant it, when we study it in the clear sky of the divine word, we realize that it includes every form of need of which

we are capable, and comprehends every possible desire and condition of our being. "For man shall not live by bread alone." The soul has wants and yearnings which will not be satisfied with a loaf. There is a heart hunger to which no baker's pan can minister. There are spiritual cravings which must be met or we shall die of starvation. "Daily bread," then, as Christ meant it, is that gracious divine providence which includes all of life—life temporal, life spiritual, life eternal. The bread that God gives is not limited to flour, for flour only ministers to the outward man, but God's bread ministers to body, soul, and spirit, and is given for the life of the world.

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”—Matt. vi, 14, 15.

VI.

Prayer

“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.”

THERE is nothing for which we so eagerly ask, or so reluctantly give, as forgiveness. No prayer is more frequently found on our lips, or more persistently denied by our hearts, than the prayer for forgiveness. The world is constantly asking for mercy, and just as constantly refusing mercy; and the very men who are the most urgent in their pleas, are the most implacable in their denials. For our own faults and failings and weaknesses we have ever a ready excuse, and we have no difficulty in finding reasons and conditions that explain why pardon should be given; but when others stand as suppliants, our ears are closed against their most pathetic cry, and we turn haughtily away. How vividly all this is brought out in one of the parables of Jesus. You remember that there was a king's servant, some court official, or public functionary, who owed his royal master a vast sum of money, ten thousand talents; and when the king discovered the condition of affairs, he commanded that this man, with his wife and children, should be sold, as was then customary and lawful, to pay off a portion of this enormous debt. The broken-hearted man cast himself at the feet of his master, and with tears and penitence besought him to have patience, and he would pay him all. The king was moved by the earnestness and intensity of the man's plea, and

with magnificent generosity frankly forgave him all that he owed. Now, if the parable rested here, we could easily imagine the forgiven man going out from the royal presence with a joy and gladness of heart which no words could describe. But the parable does not rest here; and so we see this man go out, only, however, to take his fellow-servant by the throat, who owed him a paltry hundred pence, and he who had been forgiven ten thousand talents hadn't grace enough to forgive a few miserable pennies!

And what was true in the time of Jesus is true now. Where is there any real forgiveness except that which God gives? In business? O, no. Men demand and insist upon the last penny of their claim. In point of fact there is nothing more remorseless than business. The note that is given must be met. The obligation that is held must be paid. One day too late will send a firm into bankruptcy, drive a man to despair, drag a family down to poverty and ruin.

In society? O, no. Anyone who sins against order and form and custom never finds a place of repentance, though it is sought for carefully and with tears. Society is as inflexible in its judgments as the laws of the Medes and Persians. The blot on the name can never be removed. The social rank can never be regained. The unhappy sinner is delivered over to the tormentors to remain in the prison house of hopelessness and remorse and shame.

In common life? O, no. We rarely forgive each other. We talk about forgiveness. We listen to each other's explanations and apologies, and we go through forms of repentance and reconciliation; but the word that was spoken years ago still rankles, the slight that

was put upon us yet remains, the injury that we once received has a scar that nothing can efface, and so it comes to pass that hearts are hopelessly divided, families are estranged, the sweetest affections are broken, the noblest friendships are severed, and life is robbed of some of its richest treasures.

Even among Christian people, and real Christians, too, forgiveness is but imperfectly understood. For have we not seen quarrels and bickerings in churches? Have we not seen men refuse to each other the right hand of fellowship? Have not some with whom we once took sweet counsel, and whose words and sympathies were above all price, in some way become offended and gone out to find other fellowships?

But suppose that we bring this matter home to our own hearts, do we not see that forgiveness in the larger, rich, full meaning of the word is something of which most of us know very little? For how do we forgive? When we are sinned against, when wrong has been done to us, when we have been hurt maliciously, when the poisoned arrow has pierced our quivering flesh, when some advantage has been taken of us, what is the spirit of our forgiveness? Do we cherish no anger? Do we harbor no resentment? Have we no desire for revenge? Are we free from all feeling of vindictiveness? In all honesty, do not most of us absolutely pride ourselves upon our ability to remain obdurate even to the very last?

And yet here is this prayer, a prayer given by our blessed Lord as the model for all prayer, and in this petition, which we have chosen for our text, we are to ask for forgiveness only on the condition that we also forgive. Christ makes this very plain, and says most

distinctly, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Just what the axle is to the wheel, what the bearing is to the shaft, what the pivot is to the ship's compass, so are the words "as we forgive" to this prayer; and our relations and standing with God, the pardon of our sins, the blotting out of our transgressions; in short, everything that pertains to spiritual well-being, and character, and destiny, are all involved in our real understanding of this petition. Remember that we are asking God to forgive us as we forgive; to treat us as we treat others; to extend to us the same mercy that we extend; and if we refuse, if we deny, if we withhold, God, by the very conditions of our prayer, must do likewise.

"Forgive"—And surely we have reason to offer this petition, for who can look back upon the years without feelings of shame and penitence? There may be those so thoughtless, so careless, so indifferent, perhaps so self-sufficient, as to have seemingly little concern for the weaknesses and failures of life; but when we take time to think, and to think seriously; when we think of what life is for, and how we have abused it; when we think of the years which have gone from us, never to return, with all their hopes and possibilities, do we not feel that the one word of all others which should ever tremble upon our lips is this word "forgive?" True, we may have realized some of the dreams and ambitions of youth; we may have fought our way out of ignorance and darkness and poverty; we may have gained in some measure the regard and esteem of our fellow-men; we may have so deported ourselves as to have a

fair name before the world; but when we are really honest with ourselves, when we go down into the deeps and recesses of our hearts, when we examine the motives which have actuated us, when we bring our lives into contact with the Gospel, and contrast what we really are with what God intended we should be; when we retrace our steps and go back over the way in which we have come, do we not see how far short we have fallen of the divine standard, and how utterly futile and miserable our lives must be in the sight of God? And it may also be true that we have kept the commandments, and have been orthodox in our faith and met the ceremonial requirements of religion; but have we kept the commandments in the spirit? What about the heart idolatries, the heart murders, the heart thefts, the heart blasphemies? What about the covetousness, the strife, the desire, the wrongdoing of the soul? O, when one thinks of this inward life, this life that is hidden from the world, and which we would hide even from ourselves, and then when we remember that this is the life that is naked and open before Him with whom we have to do, if we have anything of honesty or sincerity left, surely we must say "forgive?" And the more carefully we study the Gospel, and observe its standards of life and character; the more we study the nature and attributes of God, and see the beauty and glory of His holiness; the more we study the life of Jesus, and think of the perfection of His humanity, the more we realize our own utter and miserable failures. The reason why so many people are satisfied with themselves is because they have no idea as to either the purpose or value of life.

Suppose that a thoughtless lad goes into the workshop of a lapidary, and he sees there upon a bench what seems a piece of gum arabic, or possibly a bit of Siberian amber. To him the thing has no value whatever, and he would just as soon toss it into the fire to see if it would burn, or throw it at a sparrow perched on a neighboring housetop. But as he holds it carelessly in his hand the master comes in, and seeing that the stone is not on the bench his cheeks pale, his eyes flame, his lips tremble, and with a voice hoarse with anxiety and fear asks where it is. With the recklessness and carelessness of youth the boy throws it to him, when the man sinks into his chair, his forehead beaded in cold perspiration. And no wonder, for that stone contained a fortune. It was meant for the diadem of a king, it was simply priceless, and its loss involved absolute ruin.

Now, that is the way in which many play with life. They have no idea of its meaning, of its character, of its purpose. To them it consists of eating and drinking and wearing of clothes; of buying and selling and getting gain; of ease and pleasure and enjoyment; and yet all the while that, which to them has no higher value than the supposed gum arabic had to the boy, is a diamond in which there are immortal fires, a stone of such transcendent value that Christ died on the cross to redeem it, and which life was intended to so cut and polish as to make it worthy of a place in the diadem of an infinite God!

"Debts" is the word which Christ has used, though in the verses which immediately follow He speaks of "trespasses." Another time, when He repeated this prayer to His disciples, He said "sins;"

but while there is a distinction in the terms which are employed, the general idea is the same.

We all understand the meaning of this word "debt." Perhaps there is no other word in all our language with which so many people are more sadly familiar. It rests over many a home as a dark, thick eloud, shutting out all the light and beauty of life. It haunts many a man as a grim speeter, making its appearance at the time of all others when its presence is most hateful. It hangs around the necks of uncounted thousands with a weight heavier than a millstone, and is drowning them in the deep sea of anxiety and care. It breaks in upon the repose of the man of business, and makes sleep and rest impossible. It stifles, it crushes, it harasses, it frets. Sometimes it would seem as though it could not possibly be escaped, and that only death would bring release.

To say that a great deal of this trouble is both unnecessary and sinful only expresses what we all believe. For undoubtedly much, if not most, of this burden comes about through the veriest folly. But we are proud, we must follow the example of others, we must do, not what we can afford, but what we desire; hence we are wasteful, extravagant, careless, pretentious, assuming positions and appearances far beyond our means, and the result is debt, and debt greater perhaps than we can ever remove. Of course there are exceptions, many exceptions, and there are those who, without any fault or blame whatever, are burdened with obligations distressing in the extreme. The loss of employment, the loss of health, misfortune, bereavement, misplaced confidence, and many other causes of like nature have placed even the most

worthy and honorable people in circumstances of the utmost need. How marvelously God provided for the unfortunate poor by the institution of the Year of Jubilee, when all outstanding obligations were canceled, when the land was restored to its original owners, when the slaves were set at liberty, and when everyone was released from embarrassment and restraint.

But while it is possible in some way to estimate and provide for our indebtedness one to another, who is there that can discharge his indebtedness to God? The "ten thousand talents" of the parable but faintly express our obligations to Him. Everything we have, everything we enjoy, everything that makes life rich and full and beautiful, everything that ennobles and strengthens our being, every faculty of mind and body, every pure aspiration of the soul, are all His gifts, and He has bestowed these gifts in the most glorious and bounteous way.

Who is it that says he is not under any special obligations to God? Then what about life? None but God can give life, none but God can sustain life. And how much is life worth? But why enumerate? Why speak of bounding health—when the blood leaps joyously through the veins, when the eyes flash with the very gladness of living, when the whole body responds in gratitude to the breathings of earth and sky? Why speak of the fullness of mental life—when every faculty, strong, quick, alert, eager, waits upon the bidding of the imperious will, and the whole world is constrained to pay homage? There is no system of bookkeeping with which our schools are familiar that will enable us to keep account of our obligations to God.

But now what have we done with these interests that were intrusted to us? This is a serious question, and one that we cannot ponder too earnestly. For the gifts of God were not intended for selfish use and enjoyment. They were each given for a purpose; and unless applied to that purpose, the design of God has been frustrated. When we think, therefore, of the way in which we have used, or rather misused, the gifts of God; when we think of how we have wasted the powers and energies of the body, frittered away the qualities and forces of the mind, neglected the hopes and yearnings of the soul, surely we are the veriest bankrupts, and unless God in His infinite mercy forgives us we are undone and lost eternally.

Christ says, "our" debts, "our" trespasses, "our" sins; and they are ours. No man is going to be condemned for the sins of Adam, or for the sins of anyone but himself. We talk in a profound way about heredity, and the transmission of certain habits and characteristics, until we have almost come to persuade ourselves that many of our sins are blood legacies, for which we are hardly even responsible, and which have come to us down the generations with a force so accumulated that they are now irresistible. Just as the current of the mighty river carries the floating spar over the rocks, under the bridges, along the banks, playing with it as a child with a new toy, so men would have us think that each life is helpless, and at the disposal of passions and tendencies over which it has no control. As a comfortable evasion of responsibility the doctrine of heredity is an important discovery, and in it many men find much consolation; but if in that spar there are hidden forces abundantly

able to cope with those of the river; if instead of being a helpless log it is known to be a thoroughly equipped river boat; if it has the ability any time it pleases to cut through the waves and sail dead against the current, the excuse for shipwreck is only a lie founded on delusion and desire. Of course there are inherited qualities and inherited weaknesses. We can see the principle of heredity all about us, and not only in men and women, but in trees and flowers. But the graft in the tree, or the slip in the plant, can turn aside the course of a hundred generations, and make a new life possible. And so into every life that cometh into this world there is a distinct bestowal of the divine life, and with that bestowal there comes a power by which all the inherited tendencies of evil may be overcome. We have made altogether too much of "the sins of the fathers." We are far too comprehensive and inclusive in our thoughts concerning original sin. We have simply given people a pretext and an excuse. Our sins, whatever they may be, are "ours." If we are guilty of wrongdoing, of dishonesty, of insincerity, of falsehood, of treachery, of backbiting, of railing; if we sin willfully, deliberately; if we are selfish and hard-hearted and censorious; if we throw the reins upon the neck of desire and ambition and pride, these sins are ours, ours by choice, ours by act, ours by intent, and unless these sins are repented of and forgiven we must meet and answer for them at the bar of God.

And they are "sins," not harmless weaknesses, not innocent frailties, not thoughtless ebullitions, but sins; actual positive sins, for which we must earnestly seek the divine forgiveness. For what is sin but a

transgression of the law of God, a violation of the holy commandment, a neglect of duty, a failure to obey, culminating finally in open and aggravated defiance of heaven.

And they are also "trespasses." For what is trespassing but the encroaching upon the rights of another, the crossing of barriers which are clearly and distinctly marked, the willful invading of premises and territory against which we have been fully warned. And this is the peculiarity of all sin, that it is a distinct trespass, the invasion of another's rights, and the passing of boundaries which were set for protection and safety. Look at this for just a moment. If you steal you cross the line of another's property, and are in territory to which you have no right. So with everything. No man can commit sin of any sort without being a trespasser on the rights and privileges of others. When a man sins against himself, he trespasses on the rights of his family. When a man wastes his money in dissipation and drink, he trespasses on the rights of his children. The very moment we sin we cross the line of our neighbor's property, and invade a domain in which we have no right whatever. The man who flings an oath upon your ear, who puts a temptation in your way, who exposes you to hurt, that man has crossed the boundaries of your personal liberty, and has unwarrantably interfered with your well-defined and heaven-ordained rights. The sinner is the only being on the earth who is a trespasser; for this is God's world, made by God, upheld by God, redeemed by God, and any man who is not doing God's will has no right here, and his presence is a dangerous

intrusion upon the rights of others. But O, how we have trespassed! How ruthlessly we have trampled down the barriers, broken through the hedges, and defied the marks and warnings! Instead of walking in our own path, living our own life, and careful of the rights and privileges of others, we have been selfish and reckless and heedless, and have taken away from others the very things which which we should have helped them to guard.

And if this is true of our relations one to the other, how much more is it true of our relations to God? His world: and yet we have tramped through it with an utter disregard of either ownership or consequence. His word: and yet we have refused to listen to it, and have gone on in our own heedless reckless way.

We do well, then, to pray for forgiveness. And, blessed be the name of God, forgiveness is possible; nor is it the stunted, forced forgiveness with which we are all familiar, but that royal, that magnificent, that divine forgiveness, which casts our iniquities behind the back of Infinity, which removes our transgressions from us "as far as the east is from the west," and which blots out our sins like the thick cloud coming into the blaze of the noonday sun. Then let us pray for forgiveness—forgiveness for the weakness, the failure, the sin, the wrong—and as we pray for mercy, may we in turn give mercy to others.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man : but God *is* faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”—1 Cor. x, 13.

VII.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

THE picture of some noble building, such as the Westminster Abbey or the Cologne Cathedral, when seen by itself, fills the eye with its stateliness and beauty, and sets forth most strikingly its architectural harmonies and proportions; but when that same building is seen only on the map of the city it is almost lost in the multitude of other buildings by which it is surrounded, and can hardly be distinguished in the general mass and array of houses and streets.

So with this word “temptation”—the central and emphatic word of our text. Seen in the Scriptures and in the light of divine intent it is striking, impressive, significant, and seemingly has a purpose distinctively its own; but when thrown amid a heap of other words, and used with reckless familiarity, its high meaning is almost lost and its real character well-nigh forgotten. Take, for instance, that experience in the life of Abraham, when he was commanded to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah. In his case we see the real meaning of the word “tempt;” for that command was simply a test, a trial, a proof as to the quality and endurance of the faith which Abraham professed. And the same is true of that great battle of the wilderness when Jesus was tempted of the devil; for we are distinctly

told that this temptation was not accidental, but that Jesus was "led up of the Spirit." And this was done so that at the very beginning of His ministry Jesus might give abundant proof of His ability to accomplish the work for which He came to the world. The fact is, and it is well for us to thoroughly understand it, temptation, as a test, is an indispensable part of the discipline of life: perhaps it would be even more true to say that the whole of life is a form of temptation. For if life be a term of probation in which we are to be fitted and prepared for a higher and nobler form of existence, how else can that result be secured than by tests and trials in which character will be developed and purified: thus removing the dross from the gold, the chaff from the grain, the carnal from the spiritual, and bringing about a meetness for "the inheritance of the saints in light?" And the more carefully the Scriptures are studied the more fully this is seen. For reasons which we may not now quite understand, goodness, in this world, must endure the cross and despise the shame, and the soul that will wave the palm of victory must have come up out of great tribulation. Nor have we any right to expect to enter upon an eternal and glorified state without first meeting the tests, and conforming to the standards which such a state demands. When we think of all that is meant by heaven, not merely its peace, its pleasure, its rest, but its purity, its glory, its holiness; when we think of the society which it includes—the best, the noblest, the grandest characters of all the ages; when we think of the eternities that stretch away and lose themselves in the infinitudes of God; when we think of meeting the heroes of the Church, the saints,

the martyrs, the spirits of just men made perfect; when we think of entering into the companionship of the redeemed, and of having the fellowship of angels; when we think of sitting down with Christ in the throne of His glory, and through the Spirit entering upon our eternal inheritance, it would be surely the most boundless presumption for us to imagine that we could in any degree share in that heavenly life without first having given proof of our loyalty, and demonstrated the strength and sincerity of our faith. And this is what life is for, and its only value is in its ability to accomplish this preparation; and the moment we lose sight of this life is robbed of all coherence and meaning.

If we could see our lives just as God sees them we would instantly understand that everything that comes to us is meant as a preparation for the life eternal. These things, which for want of better terms we call sickness, disappointment, poverty, affliction, are simply tools in the almighty Hand by which He would fashion us for the ages to come. From the time that the eye of the mother first rests upon her new-born babe until the weary, aged pilgrim sinks quietly into death the work of preparation never ceases; and the success of a life is to be estimated, not by what the man accumulates and then leaves behind, but by the thoroughness of the preparation that was accomplished in him and the results of that preparation as seen in his being and character. The wear and tear of life, the hurry and bustle, the cares and anxieties, the pains and pleasures, the prosperities and adversities, the expectations and disappointments, the sorrows of home, the burdens of business, the tears, the

smiles, the laughter, the pain, are all spindles and shuttles in the great mill, where the flax of human character goes through one process after another, but always under the control of the Master, and subject in all things to His will. And this is how faith is deepened, patience strengthened, love purified, hope enriched, joy mellowed, until such conditions are attained as will prepare the soul for an "inheritance among them which are sanctified."

If we once lose the idea of a divine preparation, our life becomes but a jumble of days; the weeks and the months will have no relation to each other; and the years will be but milestones on a road that leads anywhere and everywhere, without any real destination; but if we ever bear in mind the fact that God is working in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure," then life is no mere heap of fragments but a heaven-planned mosaic, in which each part has its relation to all the other parts, and all cemented together with infinite tenderness and skill.

We may imagine because we see, only here and there, a wave that comes in the pathway of the sun, and is thereby transfigured in the wondrous light, that these are chosen out and specially distinguished; but in time every part of the sea falls under that same transfiguring power, and feels the glow and glory of the heavens. And so with life. Every part of it, whether rippling in prosperity, sobbing in adversity, sleeping in peacefulness, or raging in storm, feels the grace and purpose of God and comes within the sweep of His divine providence.

It was not, therefore, against this form of temptation that Jesus desired His disciples to pray.

Then, too, we must remember that that other form of temptation, which is distinctively sinful, is not included in the divine economy; for it is written, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." Here then we are to clearly understand that whatever temptations come to us in the form of sin belong in nowise to the plan and providence of God, but are suggestions and allurements from a source totally opposite. And anything else would be contrary to every instinct of both reason and affection. To imagine God—He who is infinitely kind, tender, loving, merciful; He whose affection for His children has been made manifest in so many wondrous ways; He who has constituted Himself guardian, defender, protector, refuge, and whose whole thought is the safety and help of those who love Him—to imagine Him leading them where sin might hurt and destroy, is not possible to anyone who is in the least measure familiar with His holy word. The very thought of such a thing is akin to blasphemy.

But, then, neither must it be forgotten that sin is in the world; that we are surrounded by it; that it exists in a myriad forms; that it courses in our blood, breathes in the air, assails us from without, attacks us from within; that it is possessed of subtle, dangerous, fascinating power; that it appeals to every faculty of our being; that there is nothing within the circles of human life in which its spell is not felt; and that its temptations never withdraw themselves from our sight and reach.

Seeing then that sin is in the world, and that it lies

full upon the path of each one of us, it follows that we must of necessity meet its temptations, feel its spell and influence, and be subjected to the dangers which its presence involves. Now we begin to see the force and meaning of our Saviour's prayer, for in this light what is it but an earnest desire that God will so guide and lead us that the temptations of sin shall not overcome us, but that we may be delivered from the evil that is in the world. There is nothing cowardly in this prayer. This is not the prayer of a soul that is afraid to face danger; it is rather a prayer for leadership, for guidance, lest in the darkness the wrong road may be taken, and the life end in disaster and ruin.

An army is going to the relief of a beleaguered city; a brave, strong army it is, and full well it knows that a cruel, implacable enemy surrounds that city and must be met and overcome. But between that army and the city that is to be relieved a long, dangerous, unfamiliar course intervenes; now through narrow passes, now across barren wastes, now in marshy lands, now over mountain heights; and what the brave men need most of all is leadership, so that they will not be exposed to the ambuscade, or the rolling of great stones down the steep cliffs, or the wallowing helpless in the treacherous morass. Hence they must have a guide, or the expedition is doomed from the very outset.

And this is just what these words mean; not exemption from the burdens and distress of life; not a piteous cry for immunity from assault and temptation; not a weak hiding of one's self behind some sheltering ledge while the conflict is raging all around;

not a confession of helplessness and feebleness against the hosts of evil; but simply a desire for leadership, so that the battle may be fought faithfully, intelligently, heroically, successfully, under the direction of One whose wisdom and skill are infinite.

But just as there are strategic points on the battle-field, as, for instance, Hougoumont at Waterloo, where the stress of conflict is waged with intense bitterness, and upon which every energy will be concentrated, so in life there are situations of the gravest moment, and where the danger is extreme.

Adversity is one of these. To fight hard and yet be beaten; to struggle to one's feet only to fall again; to see the dearest hopes doomed to disappointment; to feel that the years of strength and energy have gone and still nothing has been gained; to face the pangs of helplessness and poverty; to realize that life is a failure complete and irrevocable, involves conditions distressful in the extreme. For just here come in the most dangerous temptations, and almost insensibly we are led to doubt the providence of God; to make light of His promises to help and pity; to lose faith in His care and government, and to feel that we are hopelessly deserted. We have a right then to pray that God will so order our lives, and so graciously lead us, as that we may be delivered from the power of this temptation. For there are few more difficult to resist, and many a brave, earnest soul, like a noble ship in the darkness and storm, has been caught upon the pitiless rocks and gone down in destruction and despair.

Prosperity is another danger point. And in some respects prosperity is more perilous than adversity.

We may not think so, and the very fact that we do not think so is the chief element of danger. The army that is overconfident; that fails to set the proper guards; that refuses the most unmistakable warnings, is liable at any moment to be surprised and overcome. When things go well with us in the world; when the ground brings forth plentifully so that we have nowhere to bestow our goods; when our business so increases that we are fast becoming rich; when no cloud is in the sky, no darkness in the home, no sorrow in the life, the temptation then is to forget God, to set our affections upon things of earth, and to be so absorbed in the concerns of time and sense as to have no will or thought for anything else. Many a man has been ruined by prosperity. Many a man has played the same sorry part as the Babylonian king. Many a man instead of being only in the world has become altogether of the world; and the life which, like Jacob's ladder, should have reached from earth to sky, is now nothing but flooring upon which proud feet walk and where vanity displays itself. That surely was a wise prayer of the prophet Agur: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Indeed, many of the things which we most ardently desire; many of the so-called prizes and honors of life, have connected with them temptations which few are able to resist, and when God, by His providence, so leads us that oftentimes the strongest wishes of our hearts are put aside, and the most fervently

offered prayers are seemingly denied, He is only carrying out that which is expressed in the petition, "Lead us not into temptation."

But what a comfort it is when we think of being delivered from evil! For as we read the Bible it is impossible not to see that the most dire, malign, and evil energies have been ever at work against the well-being of man, and the spiritual growth and development of the human race. In the Garden of Eden that spirit of evil was manifest in the form of a serpent tempting our first parents to sin. In the Book of Job we find the presence of a taunting, scornful being, who sneered at the goodness that there was in man, and mocked at all godly professions. The same presence was with Christ, coming to the son of the woman with the same temptation which had been so seductive in Eden, and hoping to secure here the same result. Many times in the course of his epistles St. Paul refers to the forces of darkness and evil, and in writing to the Ephesians uses the remarkable passage: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." To his mind the earth, the air, the sky, was crowded with invisible forces who were waging a bitter, relentless war against all good in the world. Now the whole design of "the Gospel of the grace of God" is to effect a deliverance from this evil, for do we not read, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil?" You see, then, that this world is the battleground of the universe. Here is being waged a conflict of almost infinite magnitude. The

powers of light and the powers of darkness are engaged in a struggle the issues of which reach into unborn eternities. But if we are faithful to God, giving to Him the leadership of our lives, and walking in the way of His commandments, He will not only guide us by his counsel, and bring us through the varied temptations of life, but he will also deliver us from evil, and lead us finally to the city of habitations. He will deliver us from the power of evil thoughts, evil desires, evil propensities, evil ambitions. He will deliver us from the power of evil men, evil associations, evil habits, evil purposes. The spirits of evil which for so long have ravaged and made desolate the hearts of men shall not have dominion over us "who are kept by the power of God;" for if we have accepted His Gospel, He will have translated us from the kingdom of darkness into that of His dear Son.

And then the rest of this prayer will but be the grateful doxology of our souls, for the kingdom will be His, and the power and the glory will be His, and unto His great name shall we ascribe all praise forever and ever. And so we pray again, and we pray with heartfelt sincerity,

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!"

until at last we come to that rest which is promised to the people of God, and enter our Father's house to go out no more forever.

THE END.



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